DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 285 CE 075 966

AUTHOR Dench, S.; O'Regan, S.
TITLE Helping Parents to Work: A Study for Kent TEC.
INSTITUTION Sussex Univ., Brighton (England). Inst. for Employment Studies.
REPORT NO IES-R-348
ISBN ISBN-1-85184-277-2
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 123p.
AVAILABLE FROM Grantham Book Services, Isaac Newton Way, Alma Park Industrial Estate, Grantham NG31 9SD, England, United Kingdom.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *After School Programs; Career Change; Elementary Education; *Employment Patterns; Foreign Countries; Job Skills; *Parent Education; *Parenting Skills; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *Reentry Workers; Retraining; *School Age Day Care
IDENTIFIERS England (Kent)

ABSTRACT

A study evaluated three clubs that provide out-of-school childcare in Kent, England: Out-of-School Childcare, Returners Roadshow and Workshops, and a parenting skills course. Questionnaires collected information from 29 club managers and 282 parents of children in the clubs and 78 participants of Returners events. Thirty participants in the parenting skills course completed evaluation forms; 22 responded to a mail survey. Findings indicated one-fifth of respondents' children attended a club 5 days per week; before the clubs opened, the respondent, usually the mother, had been the main source of childcare; and nearly two-thirds of parents reported work and study related reasons for using the club. Overall, parents reported a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of clubs' provision; three-fourths thought their children benefited positively; and the club had a strong labor market impact on respondents, mostly mothers. The clubs provided active play or sporting activities, quiet activities, and arts and crafts. Difficulties in staff recruitment included hours and pay and availability of qualified staff. Parental fees made up the majority of club income. The series of Roadshows and Workshops were attended by people planning to return to work after a gap and those wanting to change their job or career. Participants in the parenting skills courses were very positive about the course and its content. The course increased confidence and reassured people. (Contains 12 references.) (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 417 285

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Institute for Employment Studies

Helping Parents to Work: a study for Kent TEC

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A Davidson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Kent TEC

IES

CE076 966

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HELPING PARENTS TO WORK

Other titles from IES:

Supporting Skills for Care Workers
Dench S, La Valle I, Evans C
IES Report 347, 1998. ISBN 1-85184-276-4

Accountants With Attitude: A Career Survey of Women and Men in the Profession
Jackson C, Hayday S
IES Report 342, 1997. ISBN 1-85184-270-5

Who Cares? The business benefits of carer-friendly practices
Bevan S, Kettley P, Patch A
IES Report 330, 1997. ISBN 1-85184-258-6

Women in the Labour Market: Two Decades of Change and Continuity
Court G
IES Report 294, 1995. ISBN 1-85184-221-7

A catalogue of these and over 100 other titles is available from IES.

the **Institute**
for **Employment**
Studies

Helping Parents to Work:
A Study for Kent TEC

S Dench
S O'Regan

Published by:

THE INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT STUDIES
Mantell Building
University of Sussex
Brighton BN1 9RF
UK

Tel. + 44 (0) 1273 686751
Fax + 44 (0) 1273 690430

http://www.employment-studies.co.uk

Copyright © 1998 The Institute for Employment Studies

No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form by any means — graphic, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording, taping or information storage or retrieval systems — without prior permission in writing from the Institute for Employment Studies.

British Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 1-85184-277-2

Printed in Great Britain by Microgen UK Ltd

The Institute for Employment Studies

IES is an independent, international and apolitical centre of research and consultancy in human resource issues. It works closely with employers in the manufacturing, service and public sectors, government departments, agencies, professional and employee bodies, and foundations. Since it was established over 27 years ago the Institute has been a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets and human resource planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation which has a multidisciplinary staff of over 50. IES expertise is available to all organisations through research, consultancy and publications.

IES aims to help bring about sustainable improvements in employment policy and human resource management. IES achieves this by increasing the understanding and improving the practice of key decision makers in policy bodies and employing organisations.

Kent TEC

Kent TEC (Training and Enterprise Council Limited) is a private company with a Board made up of senior private and public sector leaders. It has been established to help all those in the county with an interest in work: employers, employees, the unemployed, school leavers, people with special needs, and those responsible for training and business support services.

Contents

Summary ix

1. **Introduction** 1

1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Out-of-school childcare 2
1.3 Kent Returners Network 11
1.4 The parenting skills course 12

2. **The Use of Out-of-School Clubs** 14

2.1 Introduction 14
2.2 Term-time arrangements 14
2.3 Holiday care 17
2.4 Reasons for selecting these clubs 18

3. **Satisfaction with After-School and Holiday Clubs** 21

3.1 Introduction 21
3.2 Facilities, the staff and activities 21
3.3 Attitudes to opening hours and fees 24

4. **Impact of the Clubs on Parents and their Children** 27

4.1 Introduction 27
4.2 Children's views of their clubs 27
4.3 Impact on parents 29

5. **The Extent and Nature of Provision** 35

5.1 Introduction 35
5.2 Setting up the clubs 35
5.3 The number of places and extent of provision 38
5.4 Activities provided by clubs 41

6. Supporting Clubs and Staffing Issues 46

6.1 Introduction 46
6.2 Support and advice 46
6.3 Staffing issues 48

7. The Financing of Clubs 54

7.1 Introduction 54
7.2 Finances 1996/97 54
7.3 Fund-raising 56
7.4 After the grant ends 58
7.5 Discussion 61

8. Kent Returners Network Events 63

8.1 Introduction 63
8.2 The Returners Opportunities Roadshow 68
8.3 Four-day workshop programme 72
8.4 The impact of these activities 75
8.5 Conclusions 77

9. The Parenting Skills Course 79

9.1 Introduction 79
9.2 The people attending the course 79
9.3 The course location and facilities 82
9.4 Views on the course 84
9.5 The impact of the course on parents and children 88
9.6 How could the course be improved? 91
9.7 Conclusions and an overall assessment 92

10. Conclusions and implications 94

10.1 Out-of-school childcare 94
10.2 Events for returners to work 99
10.3 Parenting skills 99

Bibliography 102

Summary

Introduction

The Kent Child Care Network (KCCN) was established in 1993 as a partnership venture between Kent TEC and Kent County Council. The aim of KCCN was, with the aid of government funding, to help individuals to set up out-of-school clubs, and support them with training, resources and assessment. KCCN found that many people wishing to return to work needed a wider range of information and support than was generally available. In 1995 a sister organisation, Kent Returners Network, was set up. KRN offers a range of support services, including a series of Opportunities Roadshows and follow-up workshops. These Networks and Kent TEC are now developing broader approaches to family and community learning, aiming to extend existing provision in imaginative and far reaching ways.

This study looked at three programmes provided by KCCN and KRN, in conjunction with Kent TEC:

- The provision of out-of-school clubs in Kent — the views and experiences of club managers in setting up and running clubs, and those of parents whose children were attending clubs were explored through self-completion postal questionnaires. In total, 29 club managers and 282 parents responded to our surveys.
- Opportunities Roadshows and follow-up workshops — postal questionnaires were sent to people who had attended one or other of these events, exploring their motivation for attending, the impact on them, and their views on these events. These activities were aimed at anyone wanting to return to work after a gap. One hundred and twenty seven people had attended these events, since records had been kept, and 78 returned a questionnaire.

- Parenting Skills Course — a new venture for KCCN was a parenting skills course, aimed at those with children aged five or under. The third element of this evaluation was a postal questionnaire survey of parents who had attended this course, to assess their views on and satisfaction with the course, and the impact it had on them. Thirty people attended the course, and questionnaires were returned by 22 of these.

The overall conclusions of our evaluation was that Kent TEC and its partners had developed three successful programmes, meeting a range of different needs. This summary illustrates the benefits of all these programmes, and points out some lessons for improvement.

Out-of-school clubs

The use of out-of-school clubs

These out-of-school clubs provide an extremely important source of childcare for many families across Kent. One-fifth of the children whose parents returned a questionnaire attended a club five days a week. Just over half attended for one or two days, and 26 per cent for three or four days. Sixty per cent of these parents reported that their children also attended a holiday club. The majority of children were aged between six and nine years old. However, 12 per cent were five years old and 14 per cent were aged ten or eleven.

Before the clubs had opened, the main source of childcare out of school hours had been the respondent, usually the mother; 50 per cent of families in term-time and 53 per cent during the holidays. Partners and friends, families or neighbours accounted for another 19 and 30 per cent of families respectively during term time, and 24 and 37 per cent during the holidays. There was therefore considerable reliance on parents juggling their work commitments, or not being in paid employment at all, and on informal sources of care.

Nearly two-thirds of parents reported work and study related reasons for using the club. The majority of these were using a club to enable them directly to enter work or training. However, there was also an element of the clubs allowing parents the space to deal with the pressures of working, studying and all their other commitments. These out-of-school clubs were also reported to

provide a good quality and reliable source of childcare. For example, ten per cent of parents reported that their children attended the club because previous arrangements had been unreliable or had broken down altogether, and nine per cent included as a particular factor the quality of provision they offered. One-third of parents also reported that attending the club benefited their children, particular lone children or those living in isolated areas.

Satisfaction with out-of-school clubs

Overall, parents reported a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of clubs' provision. The majority of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with arrangements for transporting children from school to club, the safety of their children, activities provided by clubs, the outdoor space available, the number and quality of staff working at the club, discipline and control of children's behaviour, the amount of attention given to their children and the buildings used by the club.

Only 45 parents (16 per cent) reported specific dissatisfactions with aspects of their club's provision. A number of aspects of dissatisfaction were individual to particular parents, or their children. Examples include poor relationships between staff and individual parents/children, a lack of particular activities, and cost. Other parents commented negatively on the level of discipline and supervision, the buildings and lack of outdoor space. However, it should be emphasised that the majority of parents were satisfied with these aspects of provision.

Ninety-four per cent of parents reported that the opening hours of clubs during term-time generally met their needs. However, 19 parents wanted clubs to stay open later in the evening, and ten wanted clubs to open in the morning. Not all clubs provide before-school care. Two parents reported that the club their children attended only opened a few nights a week, which caused difficulties for them. The regularity of provision was something valued by parents, and clubs need to be open all week during term time to fully cater for the needs of many working parents. One club manager did report only being able to open a few afternoons. The premises were also used for other purposes and therefore not always available.

There was greater dissatisfaction with holiday clubs; 17 per cent of parents felt that the hours of opening did not meet their needs. The main difficulty was that a number of holiday clubs only open for part of the holidays, or for only parts of each day. There has perhaps been a tradition for holiday care to be more relaxed, and for clubs to play a variety of different roles, for example, to entertain children rather than support working parents. **The main message of this evaluation is that holiday care is needed, during 'normal' working hours, to support parents' ability to work.**

The fees paid by parents are an extremely important source of club finance. Indeed, for many clubs, income from fees is the only real funding received. The majority of parents reported that the fees at their child(ren)'s club were reasonable; 12 per cent said they were cheap and six per cent felt they were too expensive. However, a further question suggested greater price sensitivity. While just over two-thirds of parents felt that their use of the club would not change if fees rose by ten per cent, 15 per cent reported that they would have to reduce their level of use of the club.

Impact of the clubs on parents and children

Ninety-six per cent of parents reported that their child was happy attending an after-school club, and three-quarters of parents thought their children benefited positively from attending a club. Clubs provide a range of opportunities not available at school or home, in particular in relation to more general social interaction and development. A number of parents of only children and those living in more isolated parts of the county particularly commented on these benefits. The main benefits commented on were:

- mixing with other children, making new friends and the general benefits of social interaction
- the range of activities available, and
- children becoming more independent, confident, learning to take responsibility and share.

Parents also commented positively on the fact that children were kept occupied and off the streets, benefited from educational and learning opportunities provided by clubs, were in a safe environment, learnt to interact with adults and were watching less television.

Impact on parents

Our data suggest a strong labour market impact on respondents to the survey, mostly mothers, and some impact on their partners. This is not just in terms of actual labour market participation. Parents also reported more intangible benefits. In particular, a theme running through the questionnaires was that parents had greater peace of mind, knowing that their children were in a safe, reliable environment, in which they were generally happy.

Some of the main impacts of the clubs on parents were:

- Before their child attended a club, 24 per cent of respondents were not working, and the majority of these were looking after children; 32 per cent were in full-time employment and 37 per cent were in part-time employment. By the time of the survey, only 10 per cent were not working; 46 per cent of parents were in full-time employment and 32 per cent were in part-time employment.
- Thirty-one per cent of respondents (usually mothers) reported being able to work longer hours as a result of their child attending a club; 13 per cent had got a job; ten per cent had gone into education or training and nine per cent had found a better job or been promoted.
- The impact on partners (usually fathers) was less marked. However, eight per cent were reported to be working longer hours, two per cent had found a job and two per cent had set up their own business.
- A hypothetical question, asking about the impact on parents' labour market activities if clubs were to be closed, suggests a major impact on mothers in particular. Thirty-two per cent said they would reduce their hours of work, 14 per cent would look for another job and 11 per cent would give up work entirely.
- Clubs have a range of less tangible effects on family life. Two-thirds of parents reported a positive benefit on the quality of family life. Out-of-school clubs were reported to have done much to improve the quality of life for parents, in particular through giving them peace of mind, reducing stress and increasing the amount of time they have to cope with life generally.

Premises and activities provided by clubs

The out-of-school clubs were providing a range of different activities. Almost all term-time clubs were able to provide active

play and/or sporting activities, and space for quiet activities, and all provided arts and crafts. Curriculum based activities were least likely to be provided. Several clubs were, however, running a French club, and providing facilities for cooking and computer games.

Only nine managers reported difficulties in meeting the needs of some children attending their club. Two main areas of difficulty emerged: meeting the needs of children with a disability or special need, in particular if individual attention was required, and meeting the needs of older children.

A few managers reported being unable to meet all the demands for sporting activities, and some reported having limited or no outside space. The biggest issue arose around the premises in which clubs are held. Managers with a supportive landlord or their own premises were least likely to report any difficulties. However, many clubs have to rely on premises where other activities take precedence. They may have access to limited areas, or have to put up with a layout which is not ideal for active children. A lack of storage space for equipment was another difficulty reported. This is not a problem particular to Kent, but an issue which has emerged in various national studies.

Support and advice received and needed by clubs

Club managers reported receiving advice and support on a range of different topics from Kent TEC and Kent Child Care Network. Health and safety, equal opportunities and staff training were most frequently mentioned. The level of satisfaction with the support and advice received was generally high.

One-third of managers reported wanting more support and advice. This was most frequently on how to obtain more funding, financial issues more generally, and staff training. Others reported needing more help in setting up clubs.

Staffing issues

The 29 clubs were employing around 158 paid staff, approximately 112 in term time and at least 106 during the holidays. Nearly half the club managers reported difficulties in recruiting staff. This was mainly due to:

- hours and pay — the very small number of hours available, the timing of these hours and the low level of pay make these jobs unattractive to many people.
- the availability of suitably trained and experienced staff.

Our survey of club managers suggests that a considerable proportion of those employed in out-of-school clubs do receive some training. However, twenty (of the 29) managers reported some difficulties in providing or obtaining training. The main problems were:

- location — the provision of training tends to be centralised in a few places which were not always easy to reach, especially if staff could not drive or did not have access to a car.
- time — in particular, managers reported on the actual time courses were held, the difficulty in releasing staff, and problems where staff worked full time (eg also in the nursery) or had other jobs.

The financing of clubs

Parental fees made up the majority of club income. Where this was not the case, the majority of other funding usually came from the TEC grant. A few clubs were receiving a small proportion of their income from other sources, for example, local authorities, charities and fund raising events.

Our data suggest that club managers have had limited success in raising additional funding. Managers reported not wanting to place an additional burden on parents who were already paying fees, and being frequently asked to assist school in fund-raising. Applying to charities and local employers was also leading to little success. There are many demands on the resources of charities, for example, and out-of-school clubs might rank low in the priority of needs compared to other causes.

Managers were asked about the relationship of income to expenditure during the 1996/7 financial year. Four managers reported that income had considerably exceeded expenditure and ten that income had just exceeded expenditure. In nine clubs, it was reported that income had been less than expenditure and a number of these clubs were struggling.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The impact of grant funding on provision

The majority of clubs had been set up during the early and mid-1990s. These clubs had been set up to address the needs of working parents and a lack of provision in the area. There was also some element of more general community and social needs stimulating the setting up of clubs.

Eight clubs had been in existence before grant funding became available. The grant had enabled managers to expand their provision, and focus on issues such as staff training and facilities to improve the quality of provision. The other clubs had come into existence since the out-of-school grant initiative was introduced. The majority of managers of these clubs reported that they would not have been able to set up their club without the assistance of a grant.

There was a mixed picture of the success of clubs once grant funding ended. Twenty-four clubs were no longer receiving any grant funding. Several clubs had had to raise fees. Eight of these clubs seemed to be facing an uncertain financial future. One club had closed in an area where the parents could not afford the fees, and three managers reported that they might have to close. In another club, fees had been increased, but the manager reported: *'. . . we struggle from month to month'*.

Plans for the future

Four managers had definite plans to expand their provision, and nine reported that they would like to but were unable to do so. The main barriers were a lack of finance and/or space, unsuitable premises, a difficulty in recruiting staff, and problems with transporting children. Three managers were seriously considering closing all or some of their provision, they simply did not have enough income to keep going.

Events for returners to work

Around half of those attending the events had done so because they were considering returning to work, however, a range of other reasons were also reported. Sixteen per cent had attended because 'it just sounded interesting', and 13 per cent because they wanted to change jobs.

The Roadshow

The Roadshow included a series of exhibition stands providing information on a range of different issues. The information on training and education and careers guidance was considered particularly useful. There was a high level of satisfaction with the quality of the exhibition stands. Those attending felt that exhibitors were approachable and able to answer questions fully, and that the information was presented clearly.

A range of seminars were held during the Roadshow. The most popular was an image consultancy, followed by further education opportunities. Although the informational side of these seminars was appreciated, the motivational aspect was just as important.

Overall, respondents were very positive about the Roadshow. Respondents valued having lots of information in one place, and found it confidence-building and inspirational. However, some people said that it had helped than be realistic about the opportunities available to them, for example, the cost of training and the number of people in the same situation.

Follow-up workshops

A series of follow-up workshops were attended by some of those who had attended the Roadshow. Fifty-eight per cent reported gaining confidence and self-esteem, and 17 per cent stressed how important it was to know that they were not alone, and valued being able to meet others in similar situations to themselves. Thirty-two per cent said that the workshops had helped them to realise what they had to offer to an employer. Others valued the specific advice given, for example with CV and job applications, and interview techniques.

Only a small number of respondents had suggestions about improving the workshops. These generally related to the timing of the workshops, *ie* taking more account of school times and childcare facilities, and the need for more follow-up sessions and individual guidance.

The impact of these events

Forty-three per cent reported that they had undertaken education or training since attending these events, 33 per cent had obtained

a job and 20 per cent had started looking for a job, but not found one. Forty-two per cent said that these events had helped them a lot.

Over half the respondents felt that there were no barriers to meeting their future ambitions. The most likely concerns were the cost of training and the lack of jobs generally.

Parenting Skills Courses

Thirty-three people attended the course. Our evaluation is based on 30 evaluation forms completed at the end of the course and 22 responses to a later postal survey.

People were very positive about the course and its content. In particular they enjoyed its informality, the friendly atmosphere, meeting others and the chance to share experiences, and the variety of subjects covered. The tutor and the way she ran the course were also praised.

People attending the course were very positive about its coverage. The sessions on first aid, diet and nutrition and child behaviour were particularly valued. Practical sessions and those on learning through play were also highly rated.

On a scale of one to five, where one was very useful, the average rating of the course was 1.95. The course was reported to have increased knowledge on child behaviour, allowed people to reflect more on their actions, to have up-dated knowledge, and had allowed people to compare themselves with others.

Many of those attending felt reassured. In a world where so much is in the press and discussed daily about children and child behaviour, they felt reassured that they were not doing things wrong, there are different ways of doing things and not necessarily a right or wrong way, and that others faced the same difficulties as they did.

The evaluation suggests that the course had a big impact, particularly in increasing confidence and reassuring people. They felt more able to engage with, entertain and discipline the children they had contact with.

The overall assessment of the course was very positive. However, a number of people wanted more time spent on child develop-

ment and behaviour, dealing with behavioural and emotional problems, setting boundaries and challenging behaviours, for example. It was not that the course did not cover all these issues, but rather that people wanted more depth of knowledge and understanding in this area. Other areas people wanted covered included: the transition to school, what to expect from schools, the curriculum, *etc.* The course was aimed at people caring for children aged five or under; however, a small number of people had older children and would have liked sessions to cover issues of particular concern to them, for example, drugs and bullying. There was plenty of scope to develop and extend this type of course.

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Institute for Employment Studies was commissioned to conduct an evaluation of three of Kent TEC's programmes:

- Out-of-School Childcare
- Returners Roadshow and Workshops, and
- a parenting skills course.

This chapter provides a background to the study. It reports the methodology adopted for the evaluation, and the criteria used to evaluate each of the three programmes. In particular, it provides a background to the development of out-of-school childcare in Britain, and how Kent fits into this provision.

Layout of the report

The rest of this report is structured in the following way. Chapters 2 to 7 discuss the provision of out-of-school childcare in Kent, drawing on a survey of parents (Chapters 2 to 4) and club managers (Chapters 5 to 7). The other two programmes are each dealt with separately in the following two chapters. Finally, Chapter 10 draws some overall conclusions and implications from the findings of these evaluations.

- Chapter 2 looks at the overall use of out-of-school clubs.
- Chapter 3 explores the views of parents and children, their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with clubs.
- Chapter 4 reports the impact of clubs on families, particularly parents' labour market activities.

- Chapter 5 moves on to the information collected from club managers, and reports the types and nature of provision and the setting up of clubs.
- Chapter 6 reports on support and advice, and staffing issues.
- Chapter 7 explores funding issues and the future of these clubs.
- Chapter 8 looks at the Roadshow and Workshops for Returners.
- Chapter 9 explores experiences of the parenting skills courses.
- Chapter 10 draws some overall conclusions about the provision of out-of-school childcare, the activities for Women Returners and the parenting skills courses in Kent.

1.2 Out-of-school childcare

1.2.1 Background to the development of out-of-school childcare

The out-of-school childcare grant initiative was introduced in April 1993, to provide pump-priming funds to encourage the development of out-of-school childcare clubs. This initiative was introduced by the Employment Department, a departure from past responsibilities. A prime motivation in developing the initiative was to help parents participate more fully in the labour market. The Employment Department's aim for the grant was stated to be:

> *'... to offer parents and guardians of school age children the chance to participate more fully in the labour market, by improving the quantity and quality of childcare available outside school hours and during the school holidays.'*[1]

Outside school hours is taken to mean all reasonable times which are outside the normal hours schools are open, including mornings before school, afternoons after school, weekends, holidays and parental shift-working times. In practice, the majority of clubs open after school and all or some of the school holidays. Weekend opening is not common. However, in catering for the needs of working parents, many clubs do open on school closure days, for example, teacher training days, and if the premises are being used during a national or local election. The

[1] Quoted in Sanderson *et al.*, 1995

clubs in Kent did not differ from those in other regions in their opening hours.

The grant is available to new out-of-school schemes, to help with set-up costs (for example, the purchase of equipment and refurbishment costs) and initial operating costs. Grants may also be given to existing clubs to support the provision of new places. Prior to the grant initiative, there were very few out-of-school clubs in Britain, and most funding has gone to the establishment of new clubs. Funding under the initiative may also be used by TECs and LECs for development work, for example, the funding of a development worker, and the provision of on-going advice and support for clubs, such as training and business planning advice. This support and advice has been very important to out-of-school clubs, as illustrated in all the national evaluations (Sanderson, *et al.*, 1995; Dench and O'Brien, 1996 and Gatenby, 1998) and this current study.

The initiative allows TECs flexibility to take into account local circumstances and needs in developing their approach to the provision of out-of-school clubs. However, a number of national criteria for the selection of clubs to be supported were set out. These addressed quality, viability, labour market impact and additionality. It is intended that the initiative will support places which are additional to existing places and do not have an adverse effect on existing provision; are of good and consistent quality; will be viable in the long run; and will benefit the local labour market, in particular through enabling parents to participate more fully.

Before the initiative was introduced, there were very few out-of-school clubs in existence, and the criterion of additionality has been relatively easy to adhere to. This is also reflected in the findings of this study. The quality of clubs is a more intangible thing to measure. The first two national evaluations (Sanderson *et al.*, 1995 and O'Brien and Dench, 1996) explored various measures of quality and the 1995 report included an annex by Pat Petrie particularly considering issues of quality. In 1994, Pat Petrie, concluded:

> *'... the children were safe, occupied and not bored or distressed. The relationship between staff and children was characterised by warmth and informality, and there were many examples of good practice.'*

The main criteria used in evaluations were the extent to which parents and children are satisfied with the clubs. The majority of parents in the various studies referred to reported high levels of satisfaction with the clubs, and that their children enjoyed attending. A number of areas where quality could be improved were mentioned, and these are not unique to Kent. These largely related to the premises in which clubs are located and the availability of space, particularly, outdoor space, for active play. These issues are returned to later in this report.

All studies have illustrated how clubs have impacted positively on the labour market participation of parents. A key aim of the initiative was to help parents return to work and/or increase their labour market participation. However, as well as enabling parents, mothers in particular, to enter work or training, this and the other evaluations referred to above are illustrating broader, less tangible impacts. In particular, parents report that they feel less guilty and reassured through using an out-of-school club. They know their children are in a safe, reliable environment in which they are happy, and this contributes to their peace of mind. Out-of-school clubs also help parents cope better with the pressures of working and bringing up a family. The evidence suggests that out-of-school clubs do not simply contribute to the quantity of labour market participation, but also the quality.

One of the more difficult criteria to assess has been the potential of clubs to become viable. This evaluation explored some aspects of viability, but a more in-depth methodology is needed to understand why some clubs survive and others do not. The most recent national evaluation (Gatenby, 1998) focused on assessing the long-term sustainability of clubs. Gatenby found that 20 per cent of the 145 clubs participating in the second national evaluation in 1995 had closed down by 1997. His comparisons of viable and non-viable clubs found that in many ways they had similar characteristics. For example, they opened at similar times, were in the same sorts of premises, had similar numbers of places and charged similar prices. Viable clubs did not have lower running costs than non-viable clubs. However, non-viable clubs did tend to have fewer children enrolled and they were less likely to be located where parents' ability to pay was greater than average, compared to viable clubs. Overall Gatenby's study suggests that clubs in areas of low income and

high unemployment faced particular challenges in balancing their income and costs.

Out-of-school clubs provide childcare for children above primary school entry age, including four year olds. However, it is mainly the five to 12 year age group which attend. The clubs aim to provide good quality and reliable childcare. Being out-side school hours, the main focus of provision is on recreational activities. As this, and other evaluations, show, it is craft and sporting activities which are most popular. Most clubs do provide space for children to relax and be quiet, and to do homework (at least during term time). There has been some debate about the educational role of out-of-school clubs, and their role in promoting the completion of homework. However, in general, after-school (as opposed to holiday) clubs have not emphasised these activities. Indeed, a recent study (Ford *et al.*, 1997) of out-of-school provision for older children (year 7 and above), concluded that successful schemes take care to ensure that:

> *'where curriculum based activities are involved they are offered in a manner that is sufficiently different to the 'classroom' process to enable children to feel that they are involved in something new and interesting.'*

The initiative is operated by the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England and Wales and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland. The first stage of the initiative involved 40 TECs in England in Wales, one of which was Kent TEC, between April 1993 and March 1994. The grant has been available to all TECs and LECs since April 1994. TECs and LECs are expected to operate the initiative in partnership with other local organisations with an interest in childcare, for example, local authorities and childcare organisations. In practice, TECs have operationalised the initiative in a number of different ways (see Sanderson *et al.*, 1995 *and O'Brien and Dench, 1996).* In some TECs, administering the initiative has been mainly done in-house, although often in consultation with other local bodies. Other methods of delivery include a partnership with other, usually local organisations; the establishment of a separate body, under contract to the TEC; and, sub-contracting the day-to-day management to an existing, usually a childcare, organisation.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The initiative in Kent

In 1993, Kent TEC and Kent County Council Education, working in partnership with each other, set up Kent Child Care Network to promote quality childcare for employers and parents. Since then, the activities of KCCN have expanded dramatically. The Network co-ordinates the setting up and expansion of out-of-school clubs, and also puts considerable resources into supporting these clubs.

All out-of-school clubs operate on a small business basis, with KCCN providing support, advice and guidance through visits, a telephone help-line, plus office and on-site consultations. Support is tailored to the requirements of individual clubs, enabling attention to be paid to both urban and rural clubs.

An important role of KCCN is the provision of training. Basic business courses are run for the owners and managers of out-of-school clubs. These provide the skills necessary to run a business, and are tailored specifically to meet the requirements of businesses working with children. Topics include business planning, management, sales and marketing, finance and staffing.

The Network also offers training in Child Care and Education and Playwork, to NVQ levels 2 and 3. The Network has its own NVQ Assessment Centre, and assessor training is also available, allowing staff to assess their own staff for qualifications. It is a requirement that at least half the staff in each club are appropriately qualified.

In addition, KCCN has developed a range of child care courses and qualifications and has piloted a programme of County Training Days, in response to requests identified by child care staff. The subjects covered include special needs, first aid, Makaton signing, behaviour management, fire awareness and music. Our club managers questionnaire included some questions on training. It is interesting that despite considerable effort being put into the provision of training, we found evidence of demand for further training.

In addition to its involvement in out-of-school childcare, KCCN has a number of other roles. In association with Kent County Council Social Services and the National Childminding Association, they have introduced a countywide framework of

quality standards for childminders. The Network also works in areas of high unemployment in Kent to promote learning. The provision of childcare is only one aspect of this. For example, the Kent Child Care Network Family Learning Centre, based in South Ashford offers 'taster' learning opportunities in a range of subjects, as well as formal training programmes including NVQs and Assessor training. During school holidays families are encouraged to learn together.

Why is out-of-school childcare so important?

During the past 25 years there has been a rapid increase in the proportion of economically active women. In 1996, 72 per cent of women aged 16 to 59 were in paid work (ONS/Labour Market Update, 1997), compared to 57 per cent in 1971 (Ellison, 1994). This trend is projected to continue into the next century, and it is predicted that 75 per cent of women of working age will be in employment by 2006. There is also a trend towards both parents working. In 62 per cent of couples with dependent children, both parents are working (Daycare Trust, 1997).

A major influence on the participation of women in paid employment has been the tendency for women to delay childbirth and to have fewer children. However, there has also been a dramatic increase in the number of women returning to work after having children. There is also an increasing tendency for mothers to return to work between children and to return to work more quickly than in the past (Court, 1995). In the early 1970s there was a marked difference in the economic activity rates of women with children and those without. Today this difference is much smaller; 65 per cent of women with children and 75 per cent of women without children are in paid employment (EOC, 1996).

Part-time working is also related to the existence and age of dependent children. In 1995, 61 per cent of women with dependent children were working part time, compared to one-third of those with no dependent children. Almost two-thirds of women with a dependent child under the age of ten worked part time, compared with 54 per cent of those whose youngest dependent child was over the age of ten.

These is an increasing body of evidence which suggests that a lack of appropriate childcare is one of the main barriers to

increased participation by women with children (see Sanderson *et al.*, 1995 and O'Brien and Dench, 1996). As more women, especially those with children, have become economically active, attention has been focused on just pre-school age children, but what happens to school age children if their parents' working hours do not coincide with school hours?. The growth of part-time work does not necessarily mean that work can easily accommodate collecting children from school, especially as many part-time jobs are in service sector jobs involving coverage for long hours of the day.

The little research which had been conducted during the early 1990s, showed that most school children are looked after by relatives or friends while parents are at work. The 1990 British Social Attitudes Survey (Witherspoon and Prior, 1991) found that ten per cent of women employees with a child under the age of 12 said that their child looked after itself until they were home. The OPCS Day Care Survey (Meltzer, 1994) shows that only three per cent of schoolchildren under eight go to a childminder, and six per cent to a children's group. Although there may often be a preference to leave children with people who are known and trusted, these informal kinds of arrangement can often break down at short notice, causing problems working parents: mothers in particular.

Some of the major concerns of parents in relation to childcare include cost, quality, reliability and location. The lack of suitably located, reliable childcare of an acceptable quality has been identified as one of the major problems faced by women wanting to return to work. It is against this background that the out-of-school childcare grant initiative was introduced. Despite a need for out-of-school childcare, the market was providing very few places. Some sort of market intervention was essential if this gap was to be in any way filled.

1.2.2 Methodology and response

There were 55 out-of-school clubs known to be operating in Kent in early summer 1997. Kent TEC wrote to each club manager explaining the research. This was followed up by a telephone call from IES, asking club managers to help with the study and to collect some information on the number of children attending each club.

After collecting information about the number of children involved, it was decided to only include parents of children who had attended a term-time club during the 1996/97 school year. A large number of children attend holiday clubs, and many managers reported difficulties in involving all these parents in the survey. Some children attend in a very *ad hoc* fashion, others only because their friends do (regardless of whether or not their parents are working). The resources available for this study only enabled a proper follow-up of parents whose children were attending during term time.

Club managers were sent a questionnaire to complete themselves, and packs to send to the parents of children attending the club. These went out towards the end of the summer holidays. It was hoped that the questionnaires could be distributed to parents before the end of the holidays. This did not always prove possible, especially if the club was closed for all or some of that period.

Questionnaires were sent to 45 club managers for completion and to 44 club managers to distribute to parents. The other manager had just closed the club, but wanted to complete a questionnaire themselves. The remaining ten were excluded from the survey for a range of reasons: five only provided holiday care, three had closed and two were unable to participate at the time (for personal reasons).

By the end of the survey we had received completed questionnaires from 29 club managers (64 per cent). Two of these managers had not sent any questionnaires to parents. One had recently closed their after-school provision but wanted to complete a questionnaire. The other had only just started the club, during the summer holidays.

In total, 282 completed questionnaires were received from parents in time to be included in the analysis.[1] These had children attending one of 27 clubs for which we had a completed managers questionnaire, or one of ten other clubs where we did not hear from the manager. We heard nothing from the manager or parents in only six clubs. One of these managers returned our pack saying that they had been so busy with a large intake for

[1] Two uncompleted questionnaires were also returned, and a further 15 arrived too late to be included in the analysis.

the new school term, they had not had time to send out any questionnaires or complete one themselves.

The aim of this evaluation was to collect a range of information from both club managers, providing a number of indicators of the success of the grant initiative in Kent. In particular, there was interest in the extent to which grant funding had contributed to expanding the network of out-of-school clubs, and the impact on parents' labour market participation.

The main aims of the out-of-school grant initiative were to significantly increase the quantity and quality of places for the care of children outside school hours, and thus enable parents to participate more fully in the labour market. There are a number of indicators of success of the initiative, and in Kent we asked questions on the following issues:

- the role of grant funding in setting up club and whether or not clubs would have been set up without such help
- the number of places provided
- financial position and longer term plans
- quality
  - from the point of view of club managers — the activities they were able to provide, training and staffing issues, satisfaction with various aspects of provision
  - from the point of view of parents — their satisfaction with various aspects of the clubs' activities and provision, their perceptions of the impact of attendance on their children and the views of their children.
- labour market impact — direct impact on parents' employment and training activities and more intangible impacts on parents' working lives and family life in general.

Kent TEC and KCCN were also interested in club managers' experiences of sources of advice and support, and their need for additional advice and support. This information will help them explore the extent and ways in which support services can be altered to further promote the development and survival of out-of-school clubs in Kent.

The use of a postal, self-completion questionnaire means that some issues could not be explored to the depth really needed. In particular, a more in-depth study is needed of how clubs survive

and become viable. This is not just the case in Kent, but rather a national issue. Some issues, for example, the setting up of clubs has been well explored in earlier evaluations, and this was not addressed again in this study.

1.3 Kent Returners Network

In 1995, Kent Returners Network was set up as a sister organisation to KCCN. The work of KCCN had found that many people, both men and women, wishing to return to work needed a wider range of information and support than that which was generally available. The Returners Network offers a range of support services, in particular Opportunities Roadshows and follow-up Workshops, which are the focus of part of this evaluation.

There are a wide range of different types of events and activities administered by TECs and their agents across the country, aimed at people planning to return to work after a break. Many of these activities have principally been aimed at women returners, however, increasingly it is recognised that anyone returning to work after a gap, whatever the reason for this gap, needs support and advice. In Kent these activities were very much aimed at all returners, although the majority of participants were women.

The Kent Returners Network sponsored a series of two-stage programmes in different locations throughout Kent. The first stage was an 'Opportunities Roadshow' which aimed to offer inspiration, information and advice to people who had been away from the labour market for a time. The objective of the Roadshow was to have under one roof, a wide range of exhibitors with whom visitors could have informal discussions. In addition, a selection of seminars were organised for visitors to attend. The intention was to help people make decisions about their next step into employment, further education and training, or setting up their own business.

Visitors were also invited to register for the second phase of the programme, the 'Preparatory Workshops'. The Workshops, usually four days in duration, included topics such a preparing CVs, interview techniques, assertiveness, office technology, time management, image management and confidence building.

Methodology and survey response

The 127 people who were recorded as having attended Kent Returners Network events were sent a self-completion, postal questionnaire, and two reminders were subsequently distributed to people who had not replied. The Post Office returned four questionnaires reporting that the person had moved, bringing the number contacted down to 123. In addition, three individuals replied but did not participate for the following reasons: the first felt unable to comment because she had only attended two mornings of the workshops, the second could not remember attending the event, and the third did not go to a Roadshow. By the close of the survey, 78 completed questionnaires were returned. This is a response rate of 65 per cent after taking into account the Post Office Returns and the three known non-responses. Two respondents had to be excluded from the analysis due to a large amount of incomplete or inconsistent answers.

The questionnaire covered both events: the Opportunities/ Careers Roadshow, and the programme of preparatory Workshops. The majority of the 76 responding to the survey had attended both. Indeed a common way of hearing about the Workshop programme was through the Roadshow. However, seven individuals came to attend the Workshops through an alternative route, and eight people did not follow up their visit to the Roadshow by going to the Workshops.

The main aims of the evaluation were to explore the impact of attending such an event on participants, including whether or not it had increased their motivation to look for work, the impact on their confidence, and how it had helped them in terms of information and advice. There was also interest in what additional information and activities would be useful, to help plan future events.

1.4 The parenting skills course

Early in 1997, the Kent Child Care Network ran a course on parenting skills. This was aimed at parents and others involved in caring informally for children aged five and under. It was not aimed at people working with children in a professional or paid capacity. The overall aim of the course was to help parents

better understand and cope with a range of issues involved in bringing up young children.

The course involved a series of ten sessions, including a general introduction, child health, diet and nutrition, first aid, baby massage, child development, learning through play, parents' own needs and behaviour/emotional development. Different experts and speakers were often used to provide a depth of information.

Thirty-three people attended this course. Our evaluation is based on 30 evaluation forms completed by participants at the end of the course, and 22 responses to a postal questionnaire survey conducted by IES during September and October 1997.

The questionnaire was designed to explore how those attending the course viewed it, and the impact it had on them some time after the course ended. The evaluation form looked at more immediate assessments of the course.

2 The Use of Out-of-School Clubs

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the extent to which our sample of parents were using before- and after-school clubs, and holiday provision. It explores the age range of the children attending clubs, the regularity and length of attendance, and previous care arrangements. The reasons for sending children to particular clubs is also reported.

2.2 Term-time arrangements

The majority of parents had children attending an after-school club:

- 173 parents had one child attending an after-school club
- 75 had two children, and
- nine parents had three children attending an after-school club.

Forty of these parents also used the club before school: 30 had one child attending both before and after school; seven had two children and three had three children attending at both times. Only two parents reported using only a before-school club, and both were sending two children.

Twenty-three parents had not answered the question about the type of club used. On the basis of the above information (excluding these missing cases) our survey covered 354 children in 259 families.

The age of these children ranged from under school age to 11. A number of clubs were based with pre-school nurseries which

Table 2:1 Frequency of use of before and after school clubs

	% of children
1 or 2 days a week	54
3 or 4 days a week	26
5 days a week	20
N = (no. of children)	150

Source: IES Parents Survey, 1997

already provided care for longer than the school day. It seems that the few (five per cent) pre-school age children included in our survey were attending the day nursery and were included because they had older siblings attending an after-school club. Just over two-thirds (69 per cent) of these children were aged six to nine years old, 12 per cent were five years old, and 14 per cent were ten or eleven. Club managers, therefore, have a very varied group of children to cater for, emphasising the need for a range of activities and facilities.

Table 2:1 illustrates the regularity with which these children, on average, attended a club in term time. Although the majority, just over half, were attending only once or twice a week, a significant group, around one-fifth, did attend every day of the week. These clubs were therefore an extremely important source of childcare for many families. Later, we consider the impact of these clubs on parents, particularly on their working lives, and these data illustrate the importance of this type of childcare, regardless of how often children attend. These patterns of attendance also help to explain the nature of vacant places and waiting lists reported by club managers (see Chapter 6). With a number of children attending only one or two days a week, the availability of vacant places may not always meet demand.

Our sample of parents had been using the clubs for varying lengths of time. Over half (54 per cent) had been using a club for at least one child for more than a year. Over half (55 per cent) of the children had been attending the club for more than 12 months; 30 per cent for between six and 12 months; and 15 per cent for less than six months. A national evaluation[1] of the

[1] O'Brien M, Dench S (1996) *The out-of-school childcare grant initiative. A national evaluation*, Department of Employment Research Series.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 2:2 Previous arrangements for looking after children out-of-school during the week in term time (multiple response question, total percentages add to more than 100 per cent)[1]

	%
Respondent looking after child(ren) themselves	50
Relative, friend or neighbour	30
Partner	19
Childminder	19
Nursery/creche	14
Paid carer in own home	6
Another out-of-school or playscheme	4
Other	3
N = (no. of parents answering question)	*264*

Source: IES Parents Survey, 1997

out-of-school childcare grant initiative found that use of a club did not always have an immediate impact on parents' labour market activities. They, in particular the prime carer, usually the mother, might wait to see how their child(ren) settled at the club and how the arrangements worked out overall. Furthermore, it can take time to find a job, arrange to enter training and generally change one's working patterns. The proportion of children in this survey who had been attending a club for quite long periods of time, suggests that there has been time for any labour market impact on parents to work through and become evident.

A number of studies have explored parents' childcare arrangements.[2] Out-of-school care has most frequently been provided by parents, in particular mothers, and friends, relatives or neighbours. The previous patterns of care reported by this sample of parents tends to reflect these patterns (Table 2:2). There are, however, a number of points worth making about this table. Fourteen per cent of parents said that before using the out-of-school club their child(ren) had been attending a crèche or nursery. This relates to the age structure of the children reported above. A number had only just started school and were

[1] Eighteen respondents did not answer this question.

[2] See, for example, Meltzer H (1994).

previously in some sort of pre-school facility, many of which open long hours to accommodate the needs of parents. The majority of care was provided by the respondent (mostly mothers), a relative, friend, or neighbour, or the respondent's partner (in the majority of these cases the respondent was a woman). Childminders were also commonly used. These data suggest that a considerable number of parents, mothers in particular, but also fathers, were given the opportunity to alter their relationship to the labour market through the provision of out-of-school care. A small number had used a different out-of-school club or playscheme. This was most commonly when a child changed school. For example, one parent had not completed a questionnaire because:

> *'. . . my child is not attending this club from the autumn term. He has changed schools this year and the new school has its own after school club.'*

Occasionally a child had moved to a newly opened club which was more convenient to use.

2.3 Holiday care

This survey focused on term-time provision. Parents only sending their child(ren) to a club during the school holidays should not have been sent a questionnaire. We do, however, have some information on the extent of participation in holiday care of the children attending a club during term time. Two-fifths (60 per cent) of our sample of parents reported that their child(ren) also attended a holiday club, a total of around 232 children.

Table 2:3 illustrates the types of holiday care parents had used before sending their child(ren) to the out-of-school club. This illustrates a strong reliance on the respondent, usually the mother, partners and informal care through friends, relatives and neighbours. Compared to the sources of after-school childcare (Table 2:2) there had previously been a stronger reliance on partners and other clubs during the holidays. This previous importance of partners suggests that lone parents with school age children might face particular difficulties during the holidays. Not all lone parents have, of course, lost contact with their child(ren)'s other parent. However, although the differences are fairly small, lone parents were slightly more likely to report

Table 2:3 Previous arrangements for looking after children during the holidays (multiple response question, total percentages add to more than 100 per cent)

	%
Respondent looking after child(ren) themselves	53
Relative, friend or neighbour	37
Partner	24
Childminder	22
Nursery/creche	18
Another out-of-school or playscheme	14
Paid carer in own home	6
Other	1
N = (no. of parents answering question)	*174*

Source: IES Parents Survey , 1997

previously relying on relatives, friends and neighbours. An arrangement which can be particularly precarious.

Fourteen per cent of respondents reported using a different club or holiday scheme. There is a long history of holiday provision in Britain, although many schemes were open for only part of the day, or were not fully supervised, for example. Children had been moved from these schemes for a variety of reasons. An important benefit of the clubs now attended is that parents have peace of mind. They know their children are in a safe and reliable environment.

2.4 Reasons for selecting these clubs

A variety of reasons were given for sending children to a particular out-of-school club. Some of these were more general reasons for using any club; others were specific, relating to characteristics of the club attended. The reasons given can be divided into a number of broad groupings, and Table 2:4 reports the spread across these.

The most frequently mentioned reasons for using the out-of-school clubs can be broadly grouped under the heading 'work-related'. Fifty-five per cent of respondents gave these types of reason. Included under this heading were work commitments,

Table 2:4 Reasons for children attending the out-of-school clubs (total percentage will add to more than 100: respondents could give more than one reason)

	%
Parents working: work related reasons	54
The activities: benefit to child	33
Location	18
Previous arrangements unsatisfactory	10
Quality of provision	9
Parent(s) studying	6
Child(ren) started school	3
Cheaper	4
Other	12
N = (number answering question)	*269*

Source: IES Survey of Parents, 1997

both parents working full time, returning to work, and increasing working hours. Parents commented, for example:

> *'I began full-time work so needed after-school care.'*
>
> *'They use it when I work. I have just started a regular job.'*
>
> *'Because we run our own business and needed more time to devote to the business.'*

A later chapter explores the impact of these clubs on parents' labour market activities. However, the reasons given for using these clubs do suggest a strong reliance on their existence by working parents. One respondent commented:

> *'I would like to stress that these facilities are vital to working parents and further development in this field is necessary.'*

A smaller group (six per cent) mentioned reasons relating to studying, in particular being able to return to full- or part-time education and having time to study at home. What is perhaps interesting about both these groups of reasons is that not everyone valued the clubs for enabling them simply to go out to work or study. A few mentioned the space a club gave them to cope with the pressures of working or studying, for example,

through allowing time at home to study and allowing time to sleep after shift work.

The second most important group of reasons related to the activities provided and benefits to children. Parents reported that children were kept occupied, given plenty to do; their children wanted to go to be with their friends; and that they valued the social interaction and mixing with other children. Those with one child in particular valued the opportunities clubs gave their children for social interaction outside school. For example:

> *'They enjoy it, especially "making things" that we do not have the materials or facilities for at home.'*

> *'I send my child to the after-school club because it is good for him to meet and play with other children, as where we live there are no children his age.'*

Closely related to this was a group of comments on the quality of provision (mentioned by nine per cent). Parents valued the flexibility of provision, its reliability and the general peace of mind it gave them. Indeed, the theme of peace of mind runs through many of the questionnaires. Parents feel happier about going out to work if they know their children are somewhere safe and being properly supervised or cared for.

Ten per cent reported that their previous arrangements had been unsatisfactory in some way. In some cases, the previous arrangement had broken down altogether, a club had closed, or a childminder had given up. Others more generally did not like having to impose on family and friends all the time.

A range of other reasons were mentioned. The largest clusters are reported in Table 2:4. Others included being new to the area and having no informal contacts; a partner being in hospital; the club being recommended by friends; and being involved in setting it up, for example:

> *'I was given an excellent report by a friend who suggested the club when my other childcare arrangements came to an end.'*

3 Satisfaction with After-School and Holiday Clubs

3.1 Introduction

If out-of-school clubs are to operate effectively, parents and children need to be satisfied with the nature and level of provision. Children have to enjoy attending, and parents need to be satisfied that their children are being properly cared and provided for. The parents' questionnaire included a set of questions exploring levels of satisfaction with various aspects of provision and trying to identify elements of dissatisfaction. The overall picture is one of considerable satisfaction with the provision. Many of the issues of concern which were raised were also commented on by managers, and these are explored further in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.2 Facilities, the staff and activities

Parents were asked to rate their satisfaction on a number of aspects of provision, including activities, facilities and the staff in clubs. Their responses are reported in Table 3:1.

Most parents were satisfied or very satisfied with all the items listed. One per cent or fewer were very dissatisfied with anything, and only a few reported being dissatisfied. The buildings and availability of outdoor space were most likely to be commented on negatively. These aspects of provision were also most likely to be reported as some cause of difficulty by club managers. The safety of children and arrangements for getting children to the club were reported to be very satisfactory by 76 per cent and 80 per cent of parents respectively. This fits with comments made earlier about the peace of mind clubs give parents. Furthermore, many of the clubs were based on or close to school premises. Transporting children to the club after school

Table 3:1 Levels of satisfaction with various aspects of provision (row percentages[1])

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	N
The arrangements for getting children from school to clubs	80	12	5	2	1	272
Safety of the children	76	21	1	2	<1	282
Activities provided by the club	70	28	1	1	–	281
The outdoor space available	68	21	7	4	<1	280
The quality of the people working at the club	66	27	5	2	<1	282
The discipline and control of children's behaviour	64	30	5	1	<1	281
The number of people employed by the club	62	32	4	1	<1	281
The amount of attention given to children	60	33	5	2	1	279
The buildings used by the club	47	45	6	2	–	282

Source: IES Parents Survey, 1997

rarely presented any difficulty in such cases. Transport was sometimes an issue where a club was based some distance from the school(s) it served. Other items were reported to be very satisfactory by nearly two-thirds of parents, and fairly satisfactory by nearly one-third.

A further question attempted to explore what it was about these areas that parents were actually dissatisfied with. Those

[1] The relatively high number of missing cases for the first row is explained by a number of respondents reporting this was not applicable, because the club was by or with the school.

dissatisfied with any aspect of provision were asked to give details. Only 45 parents (16 per cent) answered this question, again illustrating the generally high levels of satisfaction with the available provision.

The dissatisfactions reported were varied, and do not group easily into a few categories. The most frequently criticised aspect of clubs was the amount of discipline, structure and supervision. This was however, only reported by 13 parents. These parents felt there was a lack of discipline, control and supervision.

Nine parents commented on the buildings occupied by the club, they reported that buildings were poor, shabby, cramped and poorly ventilated, for example. This fits with the figures reported in Table 3:1. Club managers often have to make do with the buildings available to them and frequently do not have enough income to do anything about this. Indeed, their scope to improve buildings is usually limited as the club rarely owns or has exclusive use of these. The second national evaluation (O'Brien and Dench, 1996) also found similar difficulties with the buildings used.

Nine parents were not happy with the arrangements for transporting children, and this seemed to be particularly during the holidays. Seven parents commented negatively on the availability of outdoor space, and three on the lack of or poor facilities. Other areas of dissatisfaction were at most mentioned by three parents. These included:

- a lack of communication between staff and parents, and insensitivity to the needs of parents (four parents)
- concerns about safety (three parents)
- the lack of a quiet area for rest/homework (three parents)
- the lack of activities for older children and a need to separate by age (two parents)
- the club being too expensive (two parents)
- the length of notice required for cancellations (two parents).

The small number of parents mentioning these individual areas of dissatisfaction suggests that in many cases complaints only referred to particular individuals, or an incompatibility between certain children and staff. For example, in addition to the issues listed above, one parent reported that their child did not get on

with a member of staff and another that staff members used poor grammar. When the two sets of information presented in this section are linked, there is an overall picture of satisfaction but with most concerns being expressed about the buildings and facilities available. The other largest area of concern was the amount of discipline and supervision, although more than 90 per cent of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with these aspects (Table 3.1).

3.3 Attitudes to opening hours and fees

Two areas which have long been of concern in the provision of out-of-school childcare are the extent to which clubs are able to meet parents' needs in terms of the hours they open, and affordability. The main aim of this provision is to enable parents to better participate in the labour market. The opening hours, therefore, need to cover the times when parents are at work or training, or travelling to these, and unable to easily arrange childcare. It is also an aim that clubs should become self-financing. Although fees are not envisaged as the only source of income, in reality for most clubs they are the major source. The extent to which parents can afford to send their children to a club is therefore very important. This section explores parents satisfaction with opening hours and fees, and their sensitivity to fee changes. The financing and viability of clubs is considered further in Chapter 7, using information provided by club managers.

3.3.1 Opening hours

Parents were generally happy with the hours opened during term time; 94 per cent reported that the club's opening hours generally met their needs. The hours opened by these clubs during the holidays were slightly less likely to be satisfactory. Seventeen per cent of parents using this provision felt that the opening hours did not meet their needs. It should be borne in mind that some clubs did not open every day during the holidays, or they opened shorter hours. A few did not open at all.

In total 51 parents (18 per cent) suggested some changes in the opening hours of the club their children attended which would be helpful to them. Nineteen parents wanted clubs to stay open later in the evening, ten reported an early start and the need for clubs to open in the morning. Not all clubs provide before-school

care. Two parents reported that the club their children attended only opened a few nights a week, and that this caused difficulties for them, for example:

> *'The after-school club can only open three of the five days during the week, and as I would like to return to work after my course this may not be possible.'*

This lone parent had no other source of childcare for the other two days a week. Two parents wanted the clubs to cover teacher training days. Three wanted the club to be available by the hour.

There was greater dissatisfaction with the hours opened by clubs during the holidays. Twenty-one parents made comments relating to hours during the holidays, in particular they reported that clubs were not open everyday during the holidays or opened at different times. For example:

> *'Offered half day only this holiday, not helpful to me.'*
>
> *'Not enough days covered in holidays. Days in holidays not long enough to cover my working hours.'*
>
> *'Holiday club open maximum of two days per week. Does not always coincide with my requirements.'*
>
> *'The club is open for only several days mid week for several weeks. Although this gives the children diversions, it does not fit in with a normal working week.'*

Many clubs are run by people who are parents themselves, and/or maybe unable to work full days during the holidays. There is perhaps a tradition of holiday care being more relaxed than term-time care, in particular through not operating for such long hours. Holiday schemes were often provided to entertain children during the school holidays, rather than to support working parents. The provision of after-school care has facilitated parents' ability to work. However, many parents need to maintain the same working pattern throughout the year. Regular holiday care, open during 'normal' working hours is needed to support this.

3.3.2 Fees

The issue of fees has been of considerable interest since out-of-school childcare began to develop in a major way in Britain.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 3:2 The impact of a ten per cent increase in fees

	%
Would continue to use club as now	68
Continue to use club but for fewer hours or sessions	15
Continue to use club if could not find a cheaper alternative	6
Could not afford to continue to use club	1
Other answer	1
Don't know	9
N =	276

Source: IES Parents Survey, 1997

Running and maintaining a club costs money. Even with the assistance of a grant, there are still many on-going and renewal costs. At the same time managers, and those supporting clubs, do not want to set fees at such a level which discriminates against certain families, or which are not generally acceptable in the community they are serving. The national evaluation referred to earlier raised a number of concerns about fees.

Two simple questions were asked to assess parents' attitudes towards fees. The majority (81 per cent) reported that the fees at the club their child(ren) attended were reasonable. Twelve per cent said they were cheap and six per cent felt that the fees were expensive. However, answers to the second question suggested that attendance at clubs could be more price sensitive than these percentages indicate.

Parents were asked whether they would continue to use the club if fees were increased by ten per cent. Table 3:2 shows that, although just over two-thirds thought their use of the club would not change, others were less certain. Parents were, however, more likely to report cutting their level of use, rather than removing their children totally. This would have an impact on their ability to work, which is discussed in the next chapter.

4 Impact of the Clubs on Parents and Their Children

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores what is perhaps the most interesting part of the data, the impact of clubs on parents and their children. Other studies have illustrated a positive impact on the labour market participation of parents, in particular mothers, and this is repeated here. However, clubs also provide many less tangible benefits. For example, they contribute to the development and welfare of children, and enable parents to go to work without worrying about where their children will be, or whether a last minute care arrangement will fall apart.

4.2 Children's views of their clubs

The majority of parents thought that their children were generally happy attending the club; only ten said that their child was not happy. The reasons for this were varied. Most commonly they related to the child being bored, there not being enough children of the same age to be with, and a lack of activities, or variety in activities. Three parents commented on a lack of individual attention or adult supervision. Club managers reported that one difficulty they faced was providing for children who needed individual attention. One parent mentioned bullying and another that the club had petty rules. Although only a small number of parents felt their child was not happy at the club, the comments made do provide a challenge to club managers and staff who have to provide for the needs of a very varied group of children.

A further question asked about the positive benefits of attending an out-of-school club. Three-quarters of parents thought their child benefited from attending a term-time club as did three-quarters of those who had children attending a holiday club.

The benefits to children can be summarised under a number of broad headings and these are reported below:

- Three-quarters of parents reported that children benefited from mixing with children, making new friends, and the general benefits of social interaction. For example:
- Nearly half (48 per cent) reported benefits from the range of activities available, the outings, trips, *etc.*; outdoor and team activities; and a generally wider range of activities than could be provided at home.
- Just over one-third (37 per cent) commented on children becoming more independent, confident, learning to take responsibility and to share, the general development of a set of social skills.
- Just over one-tenth (12 per cent) felt their child(ren) benefited in generally being occupied, off the streets, being able to release energy and relax.
- Nine per cent commented on the educational and learning opportunities provided by the clubs.
- A range of other benefits were mentioned, by small numbers of parents. These included: the safe environment and continuity of care; learning to interact with adults; easing the transfer between junior and senior school; help with homework and watching less television.

Overall, parents did feel that children benefited from attending a club. Clubs provide a range of opportunities not available at school or at home, in particular in relation to more general social interaction and development. A number of parents of only children and those living in fairly isolated areas, particularly commented on the benefits to their child, for example:

> *'As my son is an only child he enjoys the company of the other children, developing his social skills and gets used to sharing.'*

> *'We do not have neighbours, so this offers companionship with all its accompanying benefits of sharing and caring.'*

This mother also commented:

> *'If I stopped working, I would have to find a way to pay for sessions there so as not to disadvantage my daughter.'*

4.3 Impact on parents

One of the most important reasons for stimulating the provision of out-of-school clubs through grants and other forms of TEC support has been to enable parents (in particular mothers) to increase their participation in the labour market. This might be quantifiable in terms of, for example, obtaining a job, entering training, increasing the number of hours worked. There are also a range of more intangible impacts on parents. Some of which have already been referred to. Our questionnaire attempted to explore both types of impact.

A number of questions were asked about parents' labour market participation, and conclusions about the impact of out-of-school clubs can be drawn from each. Most respondents to the survey were mothers. Our data suggest that it was these people who were most likely to have changed their labour market activities as a result of their children attending a club. This is not really surprising, as studies continue to illustrate that the main responsibility for childcare remains with mothers. This is also supported by our data.

Table 4:1[1] illustrates the change in labour market activity of respondents and their partners between the time of the survey and their children attending the out-of-school club. The most obvious impact was on respondents. Before their child attended a club, almost a quarter were not working, and the majority of these said they were looking after children (66 per cent). Others were mostly looking for work, looking after relatives or in education or training. Almost one-third were in full-time employment and 37 per cent were in part-time employment.

By the time of the survey, this picture had changed quite radically. It must be remembered that, although some children had been attending a club for a relatively short time, most had been doing so long enough for parents to change their labour market participation. The majority of respondents were in full-time employment (almost half) at the time of the survey. The main reduction had been in the number not working, but there was

[1] Another way of presenting these data could have been to divide them between male and female rather than respondent and partner. However, in some cases we have no information on the sex of the respondent and this complicated the analysis.

Table 4:1 Labour market participation of parents before children attended club and at time of survey (percentages)

	Respondent		Partner	
	Before using club	Time of survey	Before using club	Time of survey
Full-time employment	32	46	82	80
Part-time employment	37	32	3	3
Self-employed	6	9	11	14
Not working	24	10	4	4
Something else	1	3	–	–
N =	275	279	227	230

Source: IES Parents Survey, 1997

also a fall in the proportion working part time. A few were still looking after children at home, or had other relatives to care for. A small number were not working because they were in education or training. This figure underestimates the total number receiving some sort of training. A number were training while working and commented that the out-of-school care helped them through providing more study time. The reduction in part-time work is also reflected in Table 4:2, one of the main impacts on respondents was their ability to work longer hours.

There was remarkably little difference in the overall patterns of activity amongst partners, although the next table (Table 4:2) does illustrate some impact on their working lives. The majority

Table 4:2 Reported impact of children attending out-of-school club on parents' labour market behaviour (multiple response question, columns may add to more than 100%)

	Respondent	Partner
Started working longer hours	31	8
Got a job	13	2
Went into education/training	10	1
Got a better job/promotion	9	–
Able to set up own business	2	2
Club made no difference	50	87
N =	259	185

Source: IES Parents Survey, 1997

of partners were working full time and continued to do so. There was a slight fall in the proportion employed and an increase in self-employment, but this was not significant.

Comparing before and after patterns of activity is one way of exploring the impact of provision. We also asked a direct question about respondents' perceptions of the impact of clubs on their own ability, and that of their partner, to work and/or participate in education or training. Table 4:2 reports these impacts. Continuing the picture already built up, the impact on respondents (*ie* usually mothers) was significant, in particular one-third reported being able to work longer hours. Around one-tenth reported being able to get a job, entering education or training, or getting a better job or promotion. The use of a club was reported to have far less impact on the labour market activities of partners (usually fathers). This is not really surprising and fits with many of the findings already discussed. Nevertheless, 13 per cent of partners were reported to have changed their labour market participation, in particular through being able to work longer hours. An earlier chapter suggested that partners were often relied on to look after children before they were able to attend a club, and these two sets of findings seem to compliment each other.

Another means of assessing the impact of out-of-school clubs is to explore parents' perceptions of what might happen in a hypothetical situation. Table 4:3 illustrates what might happen if term-time or holiday clubs were no longer available. At first sight some of these data might seem contradictory, especially in relation to partners. For example, it was reported that 52 per cent of partners would continue to work the same hours if an out-of-school club closed, which sounds as if closure would make no difference. Nevertheless, in a separate category it was reported that closure would make no difference to 45 per cent of partners. Many qualitative or less tangible benefits of children attending clubs were commented on, and some of these have already been discussed. Closure of a club might not reduce the hours a partner works, but have other less tangible impacts on their working lives, for example, through creating uncertainty about whether childcare arrangements will collapse.

Table 4:3 suggests that respondents (*ie* mostly mothers) would be considerably affected if the term-time or holiday club were to close. In particular, they felt that they would have to reduce the hours they worked. Eleven per cent felt they would have to give

Table 4:3 What would happen if out-of-school clubs were no longer available? (multiple response, columns may add to more than 100 per cent)

	Out-of-school club		Holiday club	
	Respondent	Partner	Respondent	Partner
Reduce hours of work	32	11	30	10
Continue to work same hours	25	52	16	41
Have to look for another job	14	1	9	2
Give up work entirely	11	–	12	<1
Reduce amount of education/training doing	4	<1	2	–
Give up education/training altogether	1	–	<1	–
Would make no difference	20	45	29	31
Something else	13	5	14	6
N=	*261*	*186*	*137*	*108*

Source: IES Parents Survey, 1997

up work altogether if the term-time club closed, and 13 per cent if the holiday club closed. The responses classified as 'something else' in Table 4:3 further illustrate the difficulties parents might face without these out-of-school clubs, and the effort needed to continue working. For example, it was reported that the withdrawal of the club would make life more difficult and mean more juggling to fit everything in; parents would have to make alternative arrangements or rely on family and friends; children might be taken to work, especially during the holidays; or different shifts would have to be worked.

These data, combined with those reported earlier in this chapter, suggest that out-of-school clubs have had a considerable impact on the labour market activities of mothers in particular.

Partners, usually fathers, have also benefited from children attending clubs, although to a much lesser extent. Even so, it was reported that around one-tenth of partners would have to reduce their hours of work if the after-school or holiday club was no longer available.

At various points reference has been made to the less tangible impact of out-of-school clubs. The questionnaire included a general question about the affect access to an out-of-school club had on the quality of family life. Sixty-five per cent of

Table 4:4 The impact of out-of-school provision on quality of life generally

	%
Peace of mind (reliable childcare)	34
Makes life easier, less stress	30
Able to work, reduces financial stain on family	25
Children enjoy it and benefit from attending	20
Continuity of care, security for children	8
Parents happier, more relaxed	8
Increases quality of family time	8
Don't have to ask friends and family	8
Gives parents spare time of their own	7
Allows time for education/training	3
Enabled family to come off benefit	3
Other	5
N = (all those reporting a positive benefit)	*184*

Source: IES Parents Survey, 1997

respondents reported a positive benefit, and Table 4:4 broadly summarises these responses. These findings provide an additional dimension to the data already discussed. Out-of-school clubs have done much to improve the quality of life of parents, in particular through giving them peace of mind, reducing stress, increasing the amount of time they have to cope with life generally. There were a few negative comments, and these tend to fit with any critical comments reported earlier. Several parents were unhappy with the arrangements or their children were not happy at the club.

A range of other benefits were each mentioned by a few parents, these included being able to sleep after shift work, having time to look after younger children, a chance for parents to meet and making up for not going on holiday.

What is interesting about many of these reported benefits is not simply that out-of-school clubs help parents return to work, or increase their participation in the labour market. This provision also takes some of the strain of life more generally, giving working parents space and support to deal with a job and family

life, possibly education or training as well. To summarise, parents commented:

'Made it much less stressful. My child was unhappy with a childminder. Its stopped me having to do a detour before and after work.'

'Much less tension as able to work without worrying about childcare.'

'Takes away the worry of finding reliable and good childcare on days when I need to work, train or just "need some time out".'

'Affected (family life) for the better. It has enabled me to return to my career without imposing on friends and family to look after the girls. Because of the location of the club the girls know many of the other attendees which makes me feel less guilty about leaving them. By going to club before school the girls get to school early!'

5 The Extent and Nature of Provision

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins to explore the information provided by club managers. Twenty-nine club managers completed and returned a questionnaire. One of these managers had closed their after-school club, due to the lack of regular children, lack of support from the school and finance. In this chapter we explore the reasons for setting up out-of-school clubs, the impact of the availability of grant funding and the extent of provision in Kent.

5.2 Setting up the clubs

5.2.1 Reasons for setting up a club

The majority of clubs had been set up during the early and mid-1990s, although one club had been in existence in 1980. Two clubs had only just been set up at the time of the survey. The reasons these clubs were set up were all related to a lack of provision in the area, and the needs of working parents. More than half the managers explicitly mentioned a lack of provision and need for out-of-school facilities as a reason for setting up their club. A number had personal experience of the difficulty in returning to work due to a lack of out-of-school provision. For example:

> *'Due to a lack of childcare facilities in this area for school children after school and during school holidays. I was offered a full-time position of employment which I felt unable to take as I was unhappy with childcare provision for my three children.'*

> *'The club was set up by two parents who needed after-school care for four of their children.'*

> *'To fill a gap in existing out of school facilities in our area.'*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A number of clubs were based in, or with a nursery school. Eight club managers reported that the out-of-school had been provided to cater for children as they moved from the nursery to school, or due to their location near a primary school. These managers reported, for example:

'We are adjacent to (the) Infant School where most of the nursery children go when they leave us.'

'. . . parents of nursery children were concerned over what they could do with their children before, after school and in holidays after starting school.'

'. . . at parent's request.'

The other reasons given for setting up a club were closely related to the above. Managers commented more generally on the needs of working parents, for example:

'To enable parents of school age children to return to work knowing their children would be picked up from school and well cared for and also that a playscheme would be run in all school holidays.'

'To provide good quality after-school care at affordable prices.'

These comments suggest not simply a need for provision, but the need for good quality provision which parents can rely on. The peace of mind out-of-school care gives to parents was a factor emerging from the survey of parents.

There was also some element of more general community and social needs stimulating the setting up of clubs, for example:

'To provide a deprived area with after-school and holiday play scheme.'

'Lack of provision for young children's activities in village.'

'To give the community a club after school where children were safe and cared for.'

5.2.2 The impact of the TEC grant initiative

Eight clubs had been in existence before the TEC grant initiative was introduced, and one was in the development stage. It seems that a few of these clubs were not actually involved in out-of-

school care prior to the initiative. They had, however, provided pre-school childcare and had expanded from this base.

The managers of these clubs, including the one in the development stage, reported a range of ways in which their club had been developed or changed by the grant:

- Four managers reported that extra places had been provided at that site.
- Two that term-time hours had been introduced/extended.
- Six said (more) staff training had been provided.
- Seven reported that further resources (for example, equipment, new or improved premises) had been provided. One manager mentioned being able to have a new building with more space and better provision than would have otherwise been the case. Another that the grant was made for refurbishment of their building.
- In four cases provision had been expanded to cover further sites.
- Five had introduced or extended holiday care.
- In five clubs (more) paid staff have been recruited.
- In one club fees had been reduced, and in another one concessionary fees had been introduced.
- Three clubs had provided facilities for a broader age group of children.

It seems that one club was ineligible and did not receive any grant funding. The data do however, suggest that the grant funding had an important impact on these clubs. None of these managers reported that the grant had no impact on the club. It had enabled them to expand and extend their provision, and focus on issues such as staff training and facilities which could improve the quality of provision. One manager, for example, reported that although the club would have been in existence without the grant, they would have only been able to provide for a limited number.

Managers in clubs which had come into existence after the introduction of the TEC grant were asked if their club would have been set up without funding from Kent TEC/KCN. Of these 19 clubs, it was reported that 12 would not have been in existence without the grant; two would have been set up without the grant and five managers were not sure. In one of these cases

setting up the club without a grant had been dependent on whether or not they could have raised funds from the bank.

The TEC grant initiative therefore made a considerable impact on the provision of out-of-school care in Kent, both through expanding and improving the quality of existing provision and stimulating the establishment of new clubs. Many of these clubs were reported to be responding to the demands and needs of parents and, as the survey of parents illustrates, they were having an impact on the labour market activities of these parents.

5.3 The number of places and extent of provision

5.3.1 Patterns of opening

The majority of clubs for which we have information were providing care for large periods of the year. One manager had closed the after-school club but was still providing holiday care.[1] The remaining 28 were open as follows:

- 27 provided after-school care
- 20 were open during the summer and Easter holidays, and all three half-terms
- 19 provided care on Inset or teacher training days
- 17 during the Christmas holidays
- only eight were open before school in term time.

One manager reported that the club also opened in emergencies, if the school was closed. The parents survey suggested that they were generally happy with the opening hours of clubs. The greatest dissatisfaction was with the availability of holiday care. Many clubs were open for long periods of the year, and these data do suggest flexibility in provision, for example, through being open on teacher training days. However, the holidays were less widely catered for, and this is perhaps an area of provision which needs addressing further.

---

[1] One club was only providing holiday care and should not really have been included in this study. However, we were unaware of this when the questionnaires were sent out.

5.3.2 The number of places

A series of questions were asked to explore the number of children attending these clubs, during term time and the holidays, and the number of parents (or families) involved. According to our information, these clubs had at least 827 children registered for term-time attendance during the summer term of 1997, and 688 during the holiday before the 1997 summer break.[1] There was some overlap between these two groups, and approximately 891 families were being catered for by these clubs.

5.3.3 Unmet need

The extent of unmet need was explored through a series of questions on the existence of unfilled places, waiting lists and competition from other providers.

Twenty-two managers said that their club did not have a waiting list, twenty of these reported unfilled places. Three clubs had no unfilled places and small waiting lists. The other three had both a waiting list and unfilled places.[2] At first sight these data may seem contradictory. However, a waiting list and unfilled places could exist at the same time because of the disparate nature of demand. Some clubs had vacancies on certain days, which might not match the days required by those on the waiting list.

In total, 23 clubs had some unfilled places. It is, however, very difficult to report a definite level of unused capacity. Many managers were unsure about their exact number of vacancies, or reported that it varied from day to day. There was greater uncertainty about the level of vacancies during the holiday periods. One manager, for example, reported having vacancies during the holidays:

> *'Sometimes but getting more full as club becomes more established, had a waiting list for places sometimes in last summer break.'*

---

1 Four did not provide numbers for term time and three for the holidays.

2 One club had closed and therefore is not included here.

Similarly, it is difficult to provide an exact figure for the length of waiting lists. According to our evidence these were small, but they did vary, for example from day to day, or week to week.

Seven of the 29 clubs were reported to be experiencing competition from other out-of-school providers locally. Most were experiencing competition from providers of outside activities and sporting facilities more generally, which were also usually cheaper. Two were losing income as a result, and one was being left with the younger age groups. Other managers reported that the competition did not provide exactly the same level or type of provision as their club, but there was competition for some of the time. It seems that holiday clubs were most likely to experience competition. Managers commented, for example:

> *'Council run schemes only operate for a few weeks in the summer. This sometimes means everyone wants the same weeks instead of spreading holidays through the whole summer.'*

> *'Local nursery provides limited after-school care, not much impact (children usually move on to us after a year or so). Other 'holiday only' clubs — we compete for the same market!'*

It was local competition which was the final factor in the closure of one after school club:

> *'(Another club) opened round corner two months before we closed — final nail in coffin. Does not affect holiday club — as they have very little space.'*

Other factors also influenced this closure, including being in a poor area where parents could not afford the fees, and a lack of support from the local school. This manager did, however, report a continuing need in the area:

> *'We would like to re-open after-school club as there is a need in area.'*

The mid-1990s saw a large expansion in out-of-school care, and there are bound to be elements of competition in some areas. Our data do not suggest vast over-provision in Kent, although to fully explore this some assessment of the nature and distribution of demand is also needed. Many clubs with vacancies did not have places which were unfilled every day, it was more a case of there being gaps on some days of the week. One aspect of provision parents commented on was the knowledge that places

might be available in an emergency, or if they had to unexpectedly work late. Some flexibility is therefore needed in the system. The early and mid-1990s saw the expansion of provision from a very small base. However, as provision expands further, there is perhaps a need to pay greater attention to its distribution, in relation to unmet need and the location of other facilities. The national evaluation found that the market research conducted by many clubs was fairly limited. If it is accepted that a proper network of out-of-school care is needed, providing opportunities for most parents and children, a case can be made for more focused planning of further provision.

5.4 Activities provided by clubs

Most clubs were providing a range of different types of activity (Table 5:1), both after school and during the holidays. Term-time clubs, understandably, rarely provided trips or outings. The period after school rarely allows sufficient time in which to organise a visit or trip, and this might be complicated by children being picked up at varying times. Although most clubs were able to provide some sort of active play and/or sporting activities, a number of managers reported a lack of appropriate space, in particular, outdoor space when asked about the overall quality of their premises. A lack of sporting activities was also commented

Table 5:1 The types of activity provided by clubs (no. of clubs providing each activity)

	Term time	Holiday
Art and crafts	27	19
Active play and/or sporting activities	26	19
Quiet activities (eg reading, homework)	26	15
Television/videos	21	15
Music/drama	16	11
Curriculum based activities (eg IT, maths, a language)	8	3
Trips/outings/visits	7	16
Other	14	6
N =	27	22

Source: IES Survey of Club Managers, 1997

61
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

on by parents. It is, therefore, not surprising that, when talking about competitors, club managers frequently mentioned sporting facilities.

Curriculum based activities were least likely to be provided. The extent to which these types of activity should be provided has been a matter of debate. A widespread opinion is that out-of-school clubs do not have a major contribution to make in relation to the mainstream curriculum and that they should be different from school. Several clubs were reported to run a French club. The 'other activities' mentioned were mostly cooking and computer games.

There are various debates about what makes a good quality club. To be successful, clubs do have to cater for a range of different needs, and it seems that, in general, most clubs were able to do this. One area of criticism, although not specifically in relation to clubs in Kent, has been the lack of space for children who want to be quiet, read or do their homework, for example. It seems that most clubs were able to cater for this, and it was not something which attracted criticism from parents. Catering for a wide range of age groups caused greater difficulties, and this is discussed below.

Nine managers reported difficulties in meeting the needs of some children attending their club. Two main areas of difficulty emerged:

- Meeting the needs of children with a disability or special need. Providing one to one was especially difficult, given limited resources. Managers commented, for example:

  'Management of children with ADD.'

  'We have some deaf children and some who need one on one care, and we haven't the funding to get extra staff to help with this.'

  'Children who need one to one.'

  'Recruiting Police-checked staff to support special needs children at short notice.'

- Meeting the needs of older children:

  'Older children get bored so easily at the club as they are very streetwise and find our activities childish.'

'We have a wide age range from 4-14. It is sometimes difficult to plan activities (eg sport) safely to cater for all ages. The 11+ group really need a slightly different childcare service.'

Difficulties in providing sporting activities were also commented on more generally, for example, one manager reported a demand for gymnastics which they could not cater for. Comments were also made about the difficulty of arranging transport and subsidising the costs, and the need for more space so that a range of activities could be provided:

'Need the cellar converted into a useable room, to leave art and craft stuff available at all times and not have to put all away for tea time and using the kitchen.'

Managers were asked how satisfied they were with the overall quality of the premises used by their club. The quality of buildings was most likely to be commented on negatively by parents, and many managers were also critical. Many clubs have to rely on premises where other activities take precedence. They may be allowed access to limited areas, for example, or have to put up with a layout which is not ideal for active children. A lack of storage space for equipment could also create difficulties, and limit the provision of activities. A lack of resources and the buildings being owned by other organisations, both limit the extent to which changes can be made. On the other hand, having one's own premises or a large degree of freedom over alterations to premises was evident amongst the most satisfied.

- Nine managers were very satisfied with the quality of their premises:

  'We acquired it, we planned it, we maintain it.'

  'We have two bright spacious mobiles and play areas, use of all school equipment and pool.'

  'Large, warm, well appointed.'

  'Safe, large, light, enclosed grounds, adjacent to primary school.'

  'The location and facilities provide us with an ideal situation. Even though we only rent, we are able to say what we require and have any problems sorted.'

  'We have lots of space for storage of the equipment and plenty of space for the children to carry out their activities.'

- Seventeen managers were fairly satisfied with their premises. The main problems were a lack of outdoor space, small rooms, a lack of storage space, buildings which were cold in winter. Managers also commented on the need for decoration and repairs to buildings. For example:

  'We could do with more grassed area, outside storage area.'

  'We have the use of our own building . . . We have use of all outside play areas which is great. School premises however, are prone to security problems and difficulties are encountered with vandalism, etc. The building itself needs some exterior repair work which we cannot fund and we have limited funds available. I would prefer a larger building with separate rooms for eating, art and craft, free play, quiet activities, etc.'

  'We would like more money to decorate but the children like it as it is and it has a homely atmosphere. We could also do with a large room to use as they are all quite small.'

  'The premises are not suitable for sports activities, ie football, indoor games generally.'

- Two managers were not really satisfied:

  'Would like to have own premises, I have use of school hall which has to be set-up/packed away with equipment each evening. (Holiday times better).''

  'Because we share with a playgroup, health clinic and support teams which makes it very difficult to make the club orientated to 5 to 12 year olds.'

- One manager was not at all satisfied:

  'The club uses a rented place and the managers of the premises are extremely inflexible, for example, no pictures on the wall, no cupboard space in the kitchen, unable to use certain electrical equipment without a lot of conditions.'

These comments on the quality of premises reflect many of those raised in the national evaluation. Clubs are usually in rented premises, and managers are very much at the mercy of the landlord. In general, schools were found to offer the best premises, they had the necessary facilities and were geared up for young children. However, even in these premises there were sometimes restrictions and difficulties. One respondent commented:

'Schools are generally not open to having clubs, especially independent ones, running on their premises.'

— although, in the national evaluation we did find evidence of some schools being keen to have out-of-school clubs on their premises; it was an added attraction to parents in selecting a school for their children. A number of the clubs in Kent were located with a nursery, often in purpose built premises. Managers of these clubs usually seemed to report fewer difficulties with premises, although catering for a wide age range and the availability of outdoor space could still present difficulties.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

6 Supporting Clubs and Staffing Issues

6.1 Introduction

Setting up and running an out-of-school club, whether as a charity or a business, profit making or non-profit making, involves managers and management committees in a wide range of activities. They need some knowledge of employment law and how to recruit, retain and train staff, and any laws and regulations relating to the care of children, for example, as well as being able to run a club financially. This chapter explores two important areas, the provision of support and advice to club managers and staffing issues.

6.2 Support and advice

Apart from any grant funding, club managers reported receiving support and advice on a range of different topics from Kent TEC or Kent Child Care Network (Table 6:1). Health and safety, equal opportunities, registration and staff training were most frequently mentioned. The level of satisfaction with the support and advice received was generally high. One respondent commented:

'They (ie Kent TEC) are there for any queries/training.'

It is perhaps interesting that the areas which tended to create the greatest challenges for club managers, for example, registration, business planning and fund-raising, were amongst the less highly rated in terms of satisfaction. Nevertheless, the advice and support provided was rarely rated as unsatisfactory.

Eleven managers reported receiving some support or advice from organisations other than Kent TEC and Child Care Network. The support and advice received was a mixture of general information and assistance with specific issues. Six managers

Table 6:1 Types of support and advice received and levels of satisfaction with this (N = 27; numbers not percentages)

	Number receiving support and advice	Of these: Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied	No answer
Health and safety	20	11	8	–	1
Equal opportunities	19	10	7	1	1
Staff training	19	14	5	–	–
Registration	17	8	7	1	1
Premises	14	8	4	1	1
Insurance policies and procedures	12	7	4	1	–
Business planning	12	3	8	1	–
Marketing	12	4	7	–	1
Quality issues	12	5	5	1	1
Provision for children with special needs	11	6	3	1	1
Fund-raising/income generation	10	3	4	3	–
Recruiting staff	10	2	7	1	–
Other	4	–	3	–	1

Source: IES Survey of Club Managers, 1997

mentioned literature and regular magazines from the Kids' Club Network. One of these had also received specific advice on contracts of employment and policies. Four managers had received assistance from Kent County Council, usually the Social Services department, on, for example, registration, safety and dealing with children from problem families. Other sources of help included Children in Need, the PLA, the Area Health Authority and Kent Playing Field Association. One manager reported that colleagues and other clubs had provided practical advice, and another that the school in which they were based had provided practical support in setting up the club.

There was quite a considerable demand for additional support and advice. Managers were asked:

> *'Are there any types of support and advice you would find useful but have not been able to obtain, or obtain satisfactorily?'*

Ten (around one-third) said there were. The types of support and advice wanted fell into two main groups: funding and finance and staff training. There was a demand for a mixture of information and more practical assistance. Managers reported wanting the following types of support and advice:

- Funding and finance related:

  'Lottery funding.'

  'We urgently need financial support. The scheme is in danger of folding.'

  'Local government funding for out-of-school facilities.'

  'Budget management.'

- Training related:

  'Local staff training.'

  'Correspondence courses for staff unable to attend daytime training as they have other commitments.'

- Several other requests for additional help were more general and wide ranging, for example:

  'We would like to reopen the after-school club, there is a need in the area.'

  'Starter pack for setting up systems.'

  'Specific advice re contracts of employment, recruitment issues, etc. Legal advice re leave agreements, rates, etc. Help with specific areas relevant to setting up club, eg budgets, developing a fees structure, admin requirements, successful monitoring, companies to approach for help, etc..'

Requests for additional support and advice are not unique to clubs in Kent. The most recent national evaluation (Gatenby, 1998) found the one third of managers wanted more advice and training on management, financial planning, marketing and fund-raising.

6.3 Staffing issues

6.3.1 The numbers employed

The 29 clubs on which this report is based were employing around 158 paid staff in total. Approximately 112 people were

employed in term time and a minimum of 106 during the holidays. There was considerable overlap between term-time and holiday staff. Many clubs employed the same people during both the holidays and term time and some had to take on extra staff to cope with the usually greater number of children during the holidays.[1] Some managers commented on the difficulty in reporting the exact number of staff employed. A few were providing other types of childcare and some staff worked across activities; others brought in extra staff when needed:

'Some staff only work term time, some holidays, some work both. Majority are casual employees on an "as and when needed" basis.'

'Extra staff employed (during the holidays) if necessary.'

Fourteen clubs had helpers in addition to the paid staff. Nine managers reported using students, and out-of-school childcare can be a useful source of work experience for some students. Five had help from parents, for example, with paperwork, and four from other volunteers.

6.3.2 Recruitment and retention

The provision of assistance in recruiting staff was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Nearly half the club (13, representing 45 per cent) managers responding to our survey reported difficulties in recruiting staff and one reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. The reasons for the difficulties experienced can be classified into two main groups: hours and pay, and the availability of suitably trained or experienced people. Some of the comments made by managers were:

- Hours and pay related. There were several themes to the difficulties in this group, the very small number of hours generally available, the timing of these hours and the low level of pay. These jobs are not, therefore, very attractive to many people.

  'Unfortunately no-one wants a job 3-6 every evening and every holiday. If you employ all full-time staff it would not be cost effective for parents.'

[1] The number of staff employed during the holidays in less than the number employed during term time by these clubs in total, because not all clubs opened during the holidays.

'Most people looking for work in school hours, not outside.'

'Lack of interest, hours not suitable. Cannot afford to pay above the going rate.'

'Wages and hours offered for positions is low and unsociable, not enough hours for full-time work. Difficult hours to fit in with children of your own.'

'No one was interested in working for just a few hours a day and leave when they find more convenient jobs.'

- Availability of suitably trained and experienced people. The TEC and Child Care Network have done much to improve the amount of training available to those working in out-of-school clubs. However, club managers had some difficulty in recruiting ready trained and experienced staff. For example:

  'Finding people to work with both nursery and school age children.'

  'Very few people had appropriate qualifications accepted by Social Services for age group.'

  'Suitably qualified staff are hard to obtain and keep as the difficult children we have and the wages we are paying.'

Several managers reported that when they advertised jobs, applications were limited or no-one applied:

'When advertising positions through the school, no-one came forward.'

'Number of applicants replying to job adverts has been very few.'

6.3.3 Training

Kent TEC and Child Care Network, as well as other organisations, provide a range of training activities for staff in out-of-school clubs. In this section we first look at the extent to which staff had received training and go on to look at the difficulties managers reported in obtaining training for themselves and their staff.

Table 6:2 reports the extent to which clubs had used certain types of training and the approximate number of staff involved, across these clubs.[1] First aid training had been most widely

[1] Although one manager did not answer the question.

Table 6:2 Training activities

	No. of clubs (N = 28)	Approx. no. of employees involved
First Aid	27	75
Health and safety	23	43
Training for playwork qualification	22	32
County training days	18	41
Caring for children with special needs	11	20
Other	6	26

Source: IES Survey of Club Managers, 1997

used: all except one club had sent, at least, some staff on a course. Twenty-two clubs had staff studying for a play worker qualification. Training for caring for children with special needs was least widely utilised. The numbers receiving each type of training are approximate: not all managers reported the numbers involved. However, the questionnaires do suggest that a considerable proportion of those employed in out-of-school clubs do receive some training. In some clubs all staff were being trained, and across a range of areas. Several clubs appeared to be doing very little training. However, the managers usually gave a reason to explain this. For example, a number of the staff in one club had been trained before they started work there. Another manager commented:

> *'All staff had years of experience in youth work, church clubs, guide movement, summer play schemes.'*

Efforts are being made to try and ensure that all club managers had some sort of training in running a business, or some previous experience of doing so. The Advanced Certificate in Playwork now includes training on running a business. Managers were asked about their training and previous experience in this aspect (Table 6:3). The majority of managers had some training and/or experience, only four had none. Some managers reported that they had considerable experience in childcare and in running a business. The only 'other' response was:

> *'We are a registered charity not a business.'*

— although to survive, charities still need to have some element of business planning, *etc.*

Table 6:3 Business training and experience of club managers (N = 28)

	N =
Business training course (or the Advanced Certificate in Playwork)	13
Run another business (related to childcare)	10
Involved in running another business (not related to childcare)	6
No experience or training in running a business	4
Other	1

Source: IES Survey of Club Managers, 1997

Club managers were asked about the extent to which they were able to obtain enough training for their staff and themselves, and the nature of any difficulties they experienced. Thirteen agreed with the statement:

'We are able to have the minimum amount of training to get by.'

and 13 with the statement:

'We are able to meet all our training needs.'

Three did not answer the question. However, when asked about the main difficulties experienced in providing or obtaining training, 20 reported their difficulties. These were mostly those who felt they could only have the minimum amount of training to get by, but nearly half those reporting being able to meet their training needs also commented on the difficulties experienced.

The types of difficulties in obtaining training were mainly related to location and time, each mentioned by more than half these 20 managers.

- Location — there were several dimensions to this, in particular, any courses were held in a few places which could not always be easily reached, especially if people were unable to drive. For example:

  'Most of my staff do not drive; we need local training.'

  'Getting to the places, they are usually in Ashford or Maidstone.'

- Time — in particular managers commented on the actual time courses were held, the difficulty in releasing staff, and problems when staff worked full time (eg also in the nursery) or had other jobs during the day. For example:

'Finding cover staff whilst others are training. It would be nice if you could close and everyone train at the same time but this is not possible.'

'Having another job, fitting in training is difficult.'

'Many staff members work full time and cannot obtain time to train during their normal working week.'

'Myself and most of my staff are always looking for extra training, but nobody does these at an evening class and this is the only way we can do it if we are working every day.'

One manager suggested that correspondence courses should be run for staff unable to attend training during the day due to other commitments.

Another manager reported problems in financing training:

'Staff have undertaken some courses and were unable to continue for advanced course due to no finance.'

Difficulties in providing enough training are, again, not unique to Kent. Gatenby (1998) found that about one half of clubs wanted additional childcare training. Furthermore, he reports:

'About two-thirds of the schemes asking for help with childcare training were actually already receiving childcare training — childcare training was seen as an on-going need by many schemes because of staff turnover.'

7 The Financing of Clubs

7.1 Introduction

The aim of the out-of-school grant initiative was to provide pump-priming for out-of-school clubs. These clubs were expected to becomes self-sustaining as the grant ended, through parental fees and/or other fund-raising activities. This chapter explores a range of issues around funding, including the sources of finance available to these clubs, their success in raising additional funds and the impact of the end of grant funding. A number of clubs had become self-financing, usually through being able to set their fees at a level high enough to cover costs. However, the majority were only just generating enough income to cover their expenditure and a few were in severe difficulties.

7.2 Finances 1996/97

A question about the total amount of funding available to clubs during the last financial year unfortunately did not work very well. Many managers thought we were asking about the TEC grant, rather than the total amount of funding available to them.

However, we are able to explore the main sources of funding for many clubs.[1] Parental fees made up the majority of funding available to clubs during the last financial year. In ten clubs, 100 per cent of funding was from fees. In the other nine clubs for which we have information, parental fees made up between five per cent and 80 per cent of the total funding. Where this was not the case, the majority of other funding usually came from the TEC grant.

[1] Ten managers did not answer this question, several did not know and a few had only just been set up.

A few clubs received a small proportion of funding from other sources. Six clubs reported a proportion of funding coming from other sources, ranging from five to 25 per cent. However, 16 managers in total actually mentioned other sources of funding. It seems that for most of these the other funding received was very small, or a one-off donation. It did not, therefore, contribute much to the overall financing of these clubs. Eleven managers mentioned fund-raising events as an additional source of funding. No one other source dominated:

- four had received additional funding from Local Authorities
- three mentioned charities
- one the Rural Development Commission
- one a childcare organisation, and had received some equipment
- five other sources were mentioned, including Children in Need, donations from a committee member and personal finance.

One manager commented:

> *'We are a children's centre for 2-11 year olds and the nursery fees subsidise the out-of-school club. Our accounts do not show separate accounts for the nursery and out-of-school.'*

It appears that this was not an isolated example. Many out-of-school clubs were based in nurseries and there was probably some cross-subsidisation. One manager we contacted reported that she had withdrawn from providing out-of-school care and was concentrating on her core business (nursery care).

These data suggest that obtaining financial support to supplement parental fees was not easy, and this is reinforced when the attempts of clubs to raise extra funds is considered.

A further question was asked about the relationship between income and expenditure during the 1996/97 financial year.[1] Nine managers reported that income was less than expenditure, and a number of these clubs were struggling. Four reported that income and expenditure balanced, although one added the comment 'only just'. In ten clubs, income just exceeded expenditure. Four managers said that income had considerably exceeded

[1] Two clubs had not been operating long enough to provide this information.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

expenditure. One of these had opened in 1980 and was very well established; one was subsidised by being jointly run with a nursery; and the other was reported able to charge fees at a sufficient level.

After-school clubs, even if not struggling financially, are rarely earning enough income to build up any reserves or to meet any large expenditures. Indeed, several managers reported that they needed, or would like, to purchase large pieces of equipment, for example, a minibus, or decorate/renovate the club buildings. They were unable to generate enough income for these types of expenditure.

7.3 Fund-raising

7.3.1 The extent of fund-raising

A group of questions were asked to explore the extent of additional fund-raising and the success of these activities. Eleven managers reported that they had not made any attempts to raise extra funds. One of these had raised their fees. Another club concentrated fund-raising events on 'children less fortunate than ourselves'. Several explained why they did not attempt to raise funds, for example:

> *'We try not to fund-raise because of additional financial burden on working parents.'*

> *'Parents reluctant to become involved in running of club — also parents are constantly being asked to fund school money-raising projects.'*

Seventeen clubs were reported to have tried to raise additional funds. Almost all (15) had held fund-raising events of some kind. Nine had approached local employers; six had approached local and national charities.

Only two of these seventeen managers reported raising sufficient money for their needs. One of these had mostly raised additional funds through increasing fees, the other attributed success to it being:

> *'First time of asking.'*

Four managers said they had been fairly successful (raising most of the money needed), ten were not very successful (raising

only a little of the money needed) and one was unsuccessful in raising anything. One of those who felt they had not been very successful did however, report that they had raised 'enough for our purposes — only small scale'.

Most reported little support from parents, and the community generally, as the main reason for their lack of success in raising additional funds. Comments include, for example:

'Lack of support from parents.'

'Time and input can be difficult from working parents.'

'Lack of interest from parents and the local community, a general apathy.'

In many, a lack of support from parents is not surprising. They are already paying fees for their children to attend. Also, and more importantly, most parents were working and many reported that their children attending the club enabled them to work and fit in other activities, or give them space to cope with life generally. Fund-raising activities might not be easily fitted in.

The experience of those who had applied to charities illustrates the difficulties in accessing these types of funding, for example:

'Because our numbers were low I don't think some people thought it was a worthwhile investment. But we got a lot of support through fund-raising and parents.'

'Not in a deprived area, children not disadvantaged enough, people not sympathetic enough to the needs of single parents, see their dilemma as being of their own making.'

Another manager reported:

'We have approached many companies in our community, none have been interested in helping.'

In a few areas of the country there has been considerable success in involving employers in the out-of-school childcare initiative. However, generally the national evaluation concluded that employers contributed little to schemes, however hard club managers worked in encouraging them. The most common types of involvement were through vouchers or some other financial assistance to parents, or large organisations (usually local authorities or health authorities) running or subsidising holiday schemes.

7.3.2 Support 'in kind'

The national evaluation found that many clubs received some sort of support 'in kind'. The extent of this usually depended on how well networked the manager and staff were, and the involvement of a club in the local community. This help 'in kind' was often important, but usually hard work to obtain.

Eleven of the managers responding to our reported receiving support 'in kind'. The types of support were varied both in their nature and quantity. Four had reduced rent or rent free premises, for example:

> *'Hall rent free — owned by a charity.'*
>
> *'Reduced rent for hall, local church.'*
>
> *'School support for premises. Old school buildings provided after Kent Child Care Network renovated it.'*

One was allowed access to a local playing field. Kent Child Care Network was reported to provide a toy library by one manager, although undoubtedly others also benefited from this facility. Parents and other personal contacts occasionally provided support. For example, managers reported:

> *'Occasionally parents will buy pens/pencils but this is rare. Old toys are sometimes donated.'*
>
> *'Photocopying (from) parents' employers.'*
>
> *'Equipment (from) personal friends, local contacts.'*

The overall level of support 'in kind' was very low, and could rarely be seen as making a major contribution to the costs of running a club.

7.4 After the grant ends

One issue of particular interest to this evaluation was the longer term viability and future of clubs. A self-completion questionnaire can only touch the surface of this complex issue. Questions were asked about what had happened to those clubs no longer receiving a grant and what was anticipated might happen to others as the grant ended. Managers were also asked about their future plans.

7.4.1 The end of grant funding

The majority of these clubs were no longer receiving a TEC grant — 24 of those about which we have received a completed questionnaire. One of these was the club which had closed down. This manager reported:

> *'We closed after-school club when funding ran out — poor area cannot afford fees.'*

A mixed picture emerged of the financial situation of these 24 clubs.[1] Five managers reported that they were able to operate without grant funding, one of these commented (this club had been in the development stage when the grant initiative was introduced):

> *'The club has been viable and independent of grant support after three months of being open. The fees charged meet all costs.'*

Four others reported that they were able to operate without grant funding, but had increased their fees. Another manager was trying to raise more funding and, if not successful, might have to raise fees. Two clubs which had been in existence before the grant were also unaffected by the grant ending, although one commented that the training had been useful. Another manager reported having obtained extra funding elsewhere.

Another eight clubs seemed to be facing an uncertain financial situation. Three managers reported that they might have to close, and one had already closed its after-school provision. In another club fees had been increased, but the manager commented:

> *'. . . we struggle from month to month.'*

Three managers were still trying to attract funding. One of these had reduced the service provided, another said that they might have to increase fees. Reducing the service could, however, have a negative impact. In the parents survey we found that parents found it very difficult if a club only operated a few days a week, or limited hours.

Five clubs were still receiving a TEC grant. Only one of these was reported to be able to operate without grant funding. Another

---

[1] We do not have information about the detailed activities of three of these clubs.

manager was planning to increase fees. Two managers reported that they might have to close once the grant ended. The fifth was seeking replacement funding and if unsuccessful, the manager reported possibly having to close.

7.4.2 Plans for the future

Nearly half (13, representing 45 per cent) of managers reported that they had no plans to expand or contract, but that the club would continue as it was. Four managers reported definite plans to expand. Three wanted to attract more children. One was hoping to do so through advertising; another was planning activities based around different themes each day; and the third wanted to offer holiday care to pre-school age siblings of those already attending. One was hoping to expand the premises.

A greater number (nine) reported that they would like to expand but were unable to do so. A range of barriers to expansion were given and, as far as any groups can be identified, a lack of finance and/or space, and a lack of support more generally were most frequently mentioned. The following quotes illustrate the types of difficulty being experienced:

'No room to extend and premises are rented.'

'. . . and outside play space is very limited.'

'We have rooms available all we need is funding. Help with staff salaries, so that we can enlarge our group of excellent staff and be able to give more individual time to our children.'

'Problems with recruiting staff.'

'Lack of support from the school. Problems getting children to the club after school.'

'The church hall we use is not available every evening for us to provide after-school care. We would also need transport to collect the children from different schools. Staffing an after-school club would be difficult if we had more than ten children.'

One respondent was particularly ambitious, and critical:

'I would like to expand service provision to include: before-school care, our own transport service for school collection/delivery, meal provision, homework facilities and resources, improved outside play equipment, etc., etc.! Barriers are: restrictions due to size of premises; lack of suitable and qualified staff; lack of funding; poor wage/remuneration package; lack of support from local

council; help and advice for future expansion. Biggest problem has been, and will continue to be, premises.'

Earlier in this chapter it was reported that a number of clubs were struggling to survive. When we asked about plans for the future, three managers reported that they were likely to close all or some of their provision. They simply did not have enough income to keep going:

'Must have ten attending per session on regular basis to be viable. Transport is always a problem — cost, insurance, distance, escort needed (taxis).'

This club did have more than 20 children registered, but not enough attended regularly to cover their costs.

Another manager reported:

'We are running at a loss of about £10 a week at present and are seriously reconsidering our future. We are hoping to 'hold on' until the New Year when our umbrella organisation ... is appointing a co-ordinator, who we hope will be able to help find funding and possibly attract sponsorship.'

This club was in existence before the grant initiative and, without more detailed information, it was not possible to tell from the questionnaire why this club had run into difficulties.

7.5 Discussion

The overall picture of clubs' financial situations was rather varied. Club managers do very much rely on the income they raise through fees. They received a limited amount of support from other organisations, and had limited success at raising extra funds. Some clubs relied on cheap rent, and they could rarely met large capital expenditures. The TEC grant had helped many start up through covering any initial investments in building and equipment. The overall reliance on fees means that some clubs are very vulnerable. The manager of the closed club reported that they were in a poor area where people could not afford the fees. They also said:

'No one wants to help us run as a business; we do not make a profit, as rent and wages use up all the money. Parents think we are given money!'

81
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

There is perhaps bound to be some sorting out of clubs, and some closures as the provision of out-of-school care expands. Some might have been set up in inappropriate locations, while in some areas there may simply not be sufficient demand. However, it does appear that a number of clubs will struggle and close, despite a need. This will on occasions be due to those running a club having insufficient expertise in running a business. Some clubs will close regardless of the expertise of managers, especially where families cannot afford to pay. Paying for childcare is a controversial issue. Although many parents will be on a limited income and struggle, especially if they have several children, people are in general reluctant to pay what many would see as a market rate. One manager commented:

> *'The big question asked by most parents is not: are you registered with Social Services? Are the staff qualified, experienced and police checked? What activities do you provide etc. etc., BUT — How much do you charge?'*

Paying for childcare also emerged as an issue in a study of the skills required of carers recently conducted at IES. One respondent commented that, although children were parents' most precious possession, they were reluctant to pay much for their care. There either needs to be a major change in attitudes, or more investment in the system if provision is to remain widespread or of high quality. An increasing number of causes are bidding for charity and lottery money, and many public agencies have limited funds. Raising additional funds is bound to be difficult.

8 Kent Returners Network Events

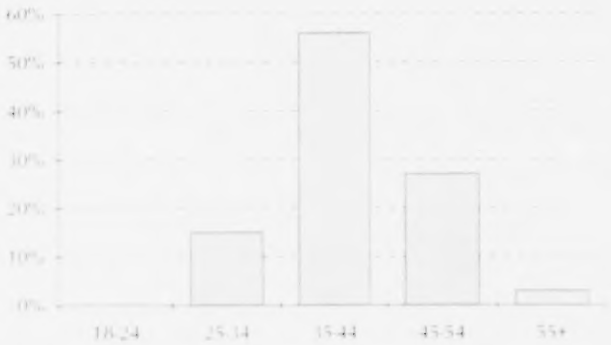
8.1 Introduction

The Kent Returners Network sponsored a series of two-stage programmes in locations throughout Kent. The first stage was an 'Opportunities Roadshow' which aimed to offer inspiration, information and advice to people who had been away from the labour market for a time. The objective of the Roadshow was to have, under one roof, a wide range of exhibitors with whom visitors could have informal discussions. In addition, a selection of seminars were organised for visitors to attend. The intention was to help people make decisions about their next step into employment, further education and training, or setting up their own business.

Visitors were also invited to register for the second phase of the programme, the 'Preparatory Workshops'. The Workshops, usually four days in duration, included topics such a preparing CVs, interview techniques, assertiveness, office technology, time management, image management and confidence building.

This chapter is based on the 76 usable questionnaires returned by the end of the postal survey (see Chapter 1). The majority of these 76 attended both the Roadshow and the Workshop programme. However, seven individuals attended the Workshops and not the Roadshow, and eight people did not follow up their visit to the Roadshow by going to the Workshops. The results presented in section 8.2 are therefore based on replies of 69 people who attended the Roadshow, while the results in section 8.3 are based on the replies of 68 people who attended the Workshops. Section 8.4 deals with the overall impact of the event(s) on the participants.

Figure 8:1 Age group of respondents



N = 75; one missing case.

Source: IES Survey, 1997

8.1.1 Characteristics of our sample

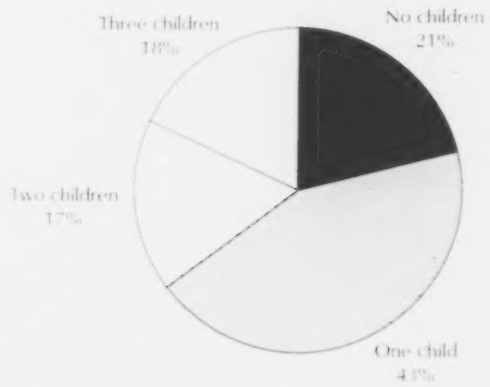
The majority of the sample were aged between 34 and 45 years (Figure 8:1). Seventy-four of the respondents were female, the remaining two did not answer the question on gender. Four in every five had children, mostly of school age. Figures 8:2 and 8:3 give additional information on the number and age of children.

The vast majority (nearly three-quarters) were not in paid employment at the time of attending the Roadshow (Figure 8:4). Of those, most reported that they were at home looking after children. Other reasons given for not being in paid employment were: returning from living abroad, recovering from an illness, or recently having been made redundant. Seven individuals had already started looking for a job, and one said she could not find a job that paid enough.

8.1.2 Reasons for attending the event

As to be expected, the main reason given for attending the event was that they were considering returning to work after a break. However, this only accounted for around one-half of respondents. As can be seen in Table 8:1, the programme also attracted people who wanted to change jobs and those who had recently been made redundant, while 16 per cent attended because "it just sounded interesting".

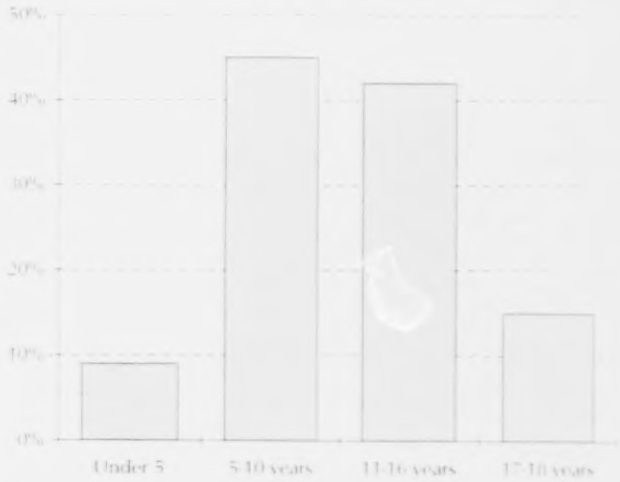
Figure 8:2 Number of children



Percentages to not add to 100% due to rounding of decimal points.

Source: IES Survey, 1997

Figure 8:3 Percentage of respondents with children in the following age groups



Respondents may have children in more than one age group.

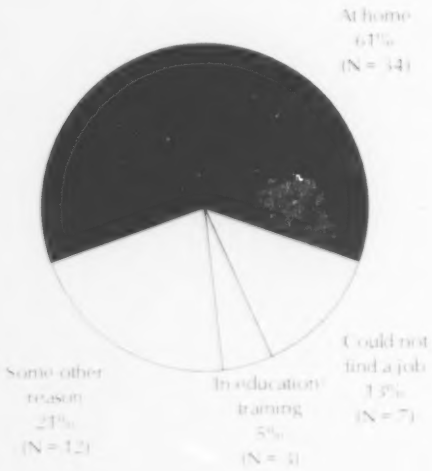
Source: IES Survey, 1997

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 8:4 Employment status or main activity at time of attending Roadshow

▲ **Employment status at time of attending roadshow**

▼ **If not in paid employment, main activity**



N = 76; No missing cases.

Source: IES Survey, 1997

Table 8:1 Main reason for attending the event

	%	N =
Considering returning to work after a break	51	34
It just sounded interesting	16	11
Wanting to change jobs	13	9
Some other reason	6	4
Considering starting up own business	5	3
Considering going into education/training	5	3
Recently made redundant	5	3

Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.
N = 67; the remaining nine cases gave more than one main reason for attending the event

Source: IES Survey, 1997

The most important source of information about the Roadshow was clearly the newspaper. One-third of respondents had seen a special feature and one-third an advertisement. Table 8:2 lists the sources from which people had heard about the event. Eleven per cent heard of it through another source not offered on the questionnaire; these generally took the form of notices posted around the community in shops and community halls.

Table 8:2 Source of information on Roadshow/Workshop

	%
Newspaper feature	34
Newspaper advertisement	32
Friends/family	13
Flyer/brochure	11
Other source	11
College of Further Education	7
Adult Guidance Centre	4
Public library	3
Employment Service	3

Percentages to not add to 100% as respondents may have heard about the Roadshow Workshops from more than one source. N = 67 responses, 76 cases

Source: IES Survey, 1997

8.2 The Returners Opportunities Roadshow

The Roadshow included a series of exhibition stands providing information on a range of different issues (see Table 8:3), and a series of seminars were run throughout the day. The questionnaire asked a series of questions about both these activities. It also explored respondents' views of the facilities and timing of the Roadshow, and their assessment of what they had got out of attending. These data are reported in this section.

8.2.1 Exhibition Stands

Respondents were asked to rate how useful they found the information provided by the exhibitors at the Roadshow. The average scores are ranked in Table 8:3 to illustrate the order of usefulness. The information on training and education was considered most useful, with 34 per cent giving it a score of five (very useful) and a further 25 per cent giving it a score of four.

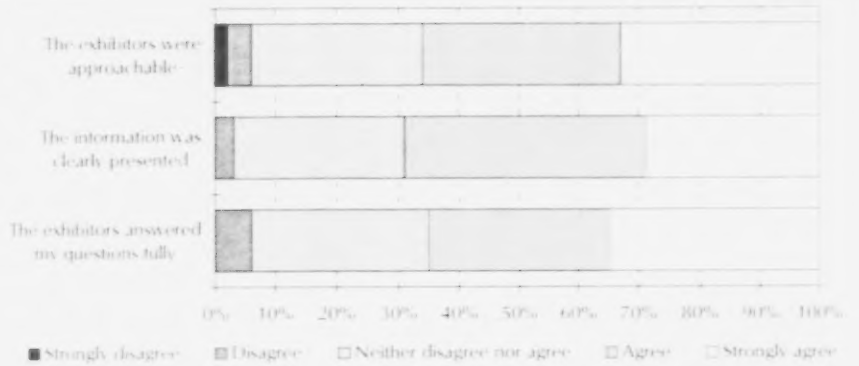
The information on benefit rights, childcare and finance were considered less useful. The low average scores do not appear to be a reflection on the quality of the information provided. It was more the case that these areas were not considered relevant to many respondents. This appears to be particularly true of childcare. Given that 63 of the 69 people who attended the Roadshow indicated that the adequacy of the childcare was not applicable to them, the results on usefulness of childcare information is not surprising. However, the Roadshow was open during school hours and so this would not have been a problem for the majority of parents.

Table 8:3 Usefulness of information of exhibitors

	Average score	N =
Training and education	3.73	67
Careers guidance	3.65	66
Image	3.40	65
Local employers	3.18	66
Finance	2.82	65
Childcare	2.61	59
Benefits rights	2.57	63

Source: IES Survey, 1997

Figure 8:5 Opinions on the style of exhibition



Source: IES Survey, 1997

Satisfaction with the quality of the exhibition stands was generally high. Respondents were asked to what degree they agreed with three statements, on a five point scale where one was strongly disagree and five was strongly agree (see Figure 8:5). The average score to the statement: 'The exhibitors were approachable', was 3.93. The majority chose either four or five, and only one individual strongly disagreed with the statement. The average scores to the statements: 'The information was clearly presented' and: 'The exhibitors answered my questions fully' were 3.96 and 3.94 respectively, with no respondents choosing the strongly disagree option.

8.2.2 The seminar programme

A range of short presentations were run during the Roadshows. Respondents were asked were they aware of the seminars taking place and whether they attended any of the sessions. Just over half of those who attended the Roadshow were aware of seminars taking place (57 per cent). Twenty-four per cent attended at least one seminar. The most popular topic was image consultancy, followed by further education opportunities.

- All respondents who answered the question replied that the length of the seminar was about right; there was one missing response.
- There was a mixed response regarding how informative they found the seminar(s). A high proportion (47 per cent) of seminar

participants chose the neutral midpoint of the five point scale. Of the remainder, just over half agreed with the statement: 'I learned things that I did not already know', and just under half disagreed. It should be pointed out that comments on the questionnaires indicate that the motivational impact of the Roadshow was appreciated as well as the informational impact. For example, when asked to describe in their own words what they gained from the day some typical answers were 'gained confidence', 'nice to know I was not alone', 'helped bring things together', 'helpful, encouraging, stimulating'.

- There was a more positive reply to the statement 'The speaker held my attention throughout'. Fifty per cent agreed, 39 per cent chose the neutral midpoint, and only 11 per cent disagreed.
- In reply to: 'The topic of the seminar addressed my situation perfectly', 28 per cent disagreed, 33 per cent circled the neutral midpoint and 39 per cent agreed. Only two respondents offered suggestions for additional topics which they would like to have seen covered. Both were concerned with presenting oneself to employers, through one's CV or generally.

8.2.3 The facilities and timing

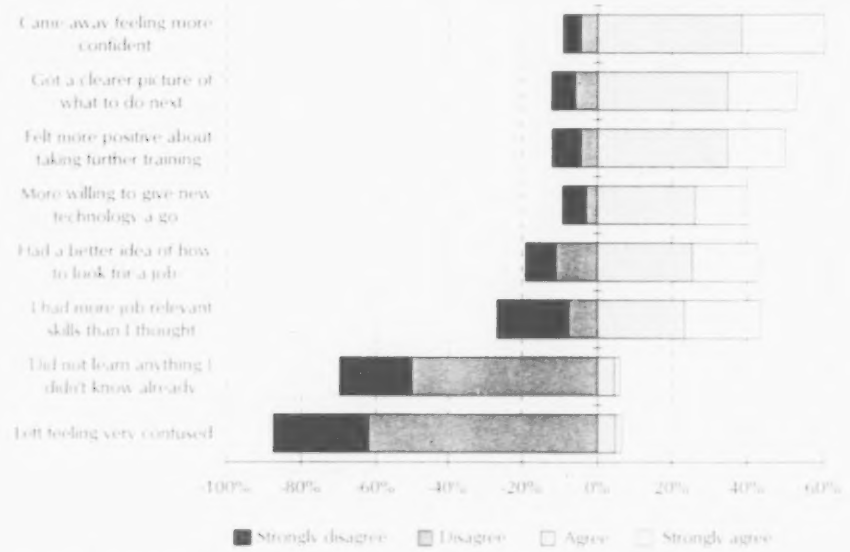
A series of questions explored how convenient respondents had found the location, time and date of the Roadshow. They indicated by scoring a five point scale where one was not convenient and five very convenient. There appears to be a very high degree of satisfaction with the system of bringing the Roadshow to the people. The average scores for location, time and date were 4.2, 4.3 and 4.3 respectively. Only one respondent used the negative points on the scale.

Respondents were also asked how adequate they found the childcare facilities. Sixty-three of the 69 attendees indicated that this question was not applicable to them. One participant did not answer this question. Therefore only five people scored this item. Of these, three had a child under the age of five and felt the facilities were inadequate. The lack of adequate childcare might have put people off attending altogether, but we have no information on this.

8.2.4 Initial impact of the Roadshow

The overall response to the Roadshow was very positive, with most feeling more confident and that they had a clearer picture

Figure 8:6 Initial outcome of Roadshow



Source: IES Survey, 1997

of what they had to do next. Figure 8:6 shows the percentage of responses to a series of statements on a five point scale, starting with the item which had the highest average score. Only six per cent agreed with the statements:

'did not learn anything I didn't know already' and

'left feeling very confused'

— indicating that the Roadshow was informative without being confusing. When asked to describe what immediate help they gained from the day, 20 per cent of respondents commented on the benefit of having lots of information available in one place. Many more found it confidence building and inspirational. In response to an open-ended question asking respondents what they had gained from the day, 17 per cent found it helpful, encouraging and stimulating, 12 per cent said they had gained confidence, ten per cent realised that there was a place for them in the workforce, and eight per cent said that it was nice to know they were not alone. Some typical comments on the immediate impact of the Roadshow are:

'I was encouraged by the advice and support offered to continue looking for employment that would fit with my particular situation. I was very impressed by the variety and volume of careers and training on offer. I came away feeling confident that I would eventually get a job and continue my personal development.'

'It was heartening to find that there were so many other people in the same position as yourself and those needs were identified and catered for to an extent by the help offered at the various stands. It gave me more confidence to actually 'do' something.'

However, the responses were not all completely optimistic. The Roadshow has managed to balance encouragement with realism. For some the Roadshow highlighted challenges that the returners had not been aware of such as:

'Realised it was going to cost a lot to be retrained.'

'Realised I had to do more computer training.'

'Daunting to realise there are so many people in same position.'

Many respondents choose the neutral midpoint on the statement:

'I was more willing to give new technology a go.'

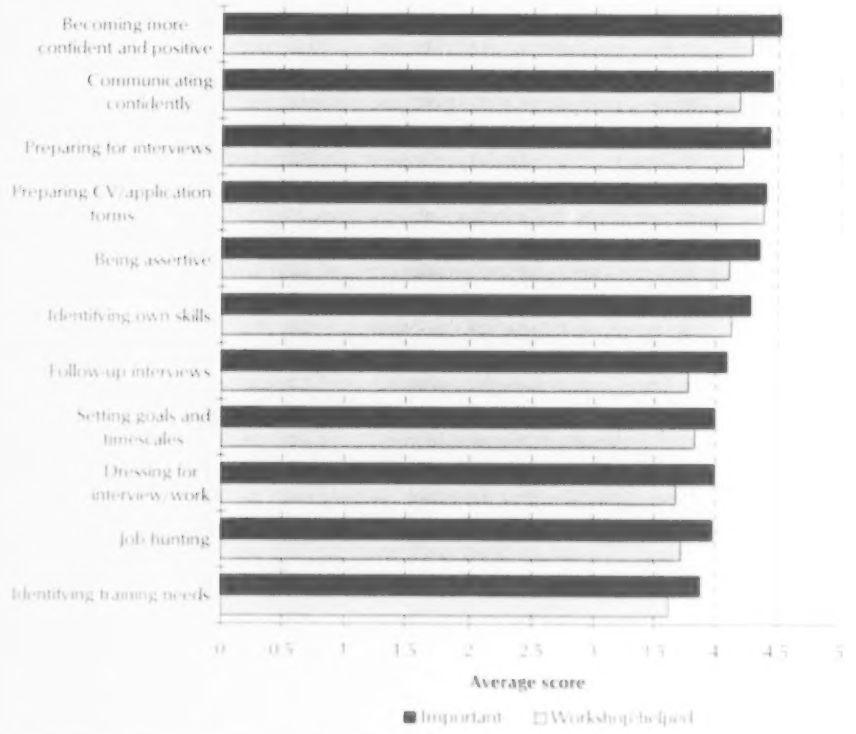
The Roadshow met the expectations of 85 per cent of the respondents. The reasons given by the remaining 15 per cent (24 people) for it not meeting their expectations were varied. Five people wanted more advertising and three said it showed that more local companies should be encouraged to join in. The other reasons included: a lack of space around stands, the need for better access for wheelchairs and pushchairs, and requests for more specific information on a range of topics (for example, starting a business, financing training, careers with children and job sharing).

8.3 Four-day workshop programme

The 68 people who had attended the Workshops were asked a series of questions exploring their assessment of the different sessions, the overall impact of the Workshops and their suggestions for improvements.

Respondents were asked to rate how important they considered each of the topics covered, and how much attendance at each had helped them. Both questions were asked on a five point scale,

Figure 8:7 Did the Workshop meet the respondents' needs?



Source: IES Survey, 1997

where one was 'not very important' and five was 'very important', and one was 'did not help much' and five was 'helped a great deal', respectively.

Figure 8:7 shows the average scores for each item listed in order of importance. Respondents generally felt that the issues listed were important and that the Workshops helped. No items had an average score below three, and most had more than four. Becoming more confident and positive, communicating confidently, preparing for interviews and CV/application forms received the highest mean scores both in terms of importance and help received.

Respondents were asked to describe, in their own words, what they gained from the day. Fifty-eight per cent listed confidence or self-esteem. Some typical responses were:

> *'I was immediately more confident. I felt able to approach interviews without worry, and also prepared a CV without any problems. The Workshop has helped me to recognise those in authority as people just like myself, and now I feel more worthy as an individual.'*

> *'Felt more confident about my ability to find a job — once both my children had started school. Found the interview practice very useful — could do with refreshers every now and again.'*

> *'The Workshops improved my confidence and enabled me to communicate more effectively and assertively. This gave me the courage to apply to college and now university.'*

Social support was considered very important for confidence building. Seventeen per cent stressed how important it was to know that they were not alone, and appreciated the contact with people in similar situations.

> *'I had been feeling alone and frustrated, useless and unconfident. The course made me realise that many people feel the same after bringing up children. It gave me a great deal of confidence, made me more able to say what I thought and gave me a positive outlook.'*

> *'Helped me feel I wasn't on my own in feeling strange and unsure about going back to work.'*

Closely connected to the two themes above is an increase in awareness of own skills. Thirty-two per cent felt that the Workshops helped them realise what they had to offer, *ie* that they knew more than they thought and that they were not 'just' a housewife.

> *'I realised that I had a lot more skills, and had a great deal to offer an employer and gave me the confidence to go and look for a job.'*

> *'I found the Workshop very motivating, realising the type of skills I had to offer even after a long period out of work.'*

In addition to the general motivational value of the Workshops, several individuals highlighted more specific help they received, such as with CV presentation and job applications (23 per cent), interview techniques (20 per cent), and the handbook which they continue to use (20 per cent).

Only nine respondents reported that there were other areas which they would have liked to have seen covered by the programme. The suggestions given were varied. They wanted to know more about the availability of free or subsidised training, specific jobs, financial training, variety of training opportunities, and more on appropriate work clothes not just colours. Some of the suggestions were more specific activities rather than topics, such as:

> *'It would be interesting to meet people who had succeeded after attending Workshops.'*

> *'Face-to-face contact with local employers to find out their requirements.'*

Nineteen per cent of respondents gave suggestions for improving the Workshop programme. Again the answers were very varied. However, they can be grouped into two types of answers, one to do with convenience and one to do with actual course content. Five suggested ways to make it easier to attend, by adjusting the timing to account for school times and childcare facilities, by having shorter sessions spread over more days, by having evening Workshops for people who work part time, and by giving more notice of courses. Suggestions falling into the second category were that people should be grouped according to experience and confidence; that there should be follow-up sessions to keep confidence up, that the image sessions should offer more individual guidance, and that the suitability of returners should be emphasised.

8.4 The impact of these activities

Table 8:4 illustrates what had happened to respondents since they attended the Returners Network event(s). This includes those who had gone to either the Roadshow or Workshops only, or had attended both. As can be seen from the table the outcomes are very positive, 43 per cent had undertaken some training or education and 33 per cent had started a job. Earlier in this chapter it was reported that nearly three-quarters of respondents had not been in paid employment at the time of attending these events. The subsequent activities of this group is perhaps particularly interesting. Of the 55 people involved, 19 had found a job, 25 had undertaken some training and 13 had started looking for a job. Ten were 'doing the same thing', usually looking after their family.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 8:4 Activities since attending Roadshow

	%	N =
Have undertaken education/training	43	32
Got a job	33	25
Started looking for a job but not found one	20	15
Doing the same thing as before	17	13
Got a better job/promotion	7	5
Started own business	7	5
Doing something else	7	5

Percentages do not add to 100% because returners could have selected more than one outcome.
N = 75, one missing case

Source: IES Survey, 1997

Participants were asked to what extent these outcomes were influenced by the KRN events. On a five point scale, where one was 'helped a lot' and five was 'did not help at all', 42 per cent said that the events helped them a lot, and 15 per cent rated the help at two. Sixteen per cent chose the neutral midpoint (three), and 22 per cent and five per cent selected four and five respectively.

We also tried to explore respondents' future ambitions. The most frequently mentioned ambition was to complete their training (34 per cent). Thirteen percent of respondents were aiming to get a job. Nine percent were anticipating getting a better job than the one they had at that time. The remaining answers were varied and usually related to factors mitigating against a respondent doing much that was new; for example, one reported that a history of nervous breakdowns went against her, another was caring for a family member and another reported that her age was against her.

The questionnaire also asked what, if any barriers existed to realising their ambitions. The picture remains fairly optimistic, with just over half of the respondents feeling that there were no barriers in their way. However, as can be seen from Table 8:5 there was concern particularly about the cost of training and lack of jobs generally. Respondents were asked to explain some of their answers in a space left for open comment. Amongst the nine per cent who felt that the jobs available were not suitable

Table 8:5 Main reason for attending the event

	%	N =
No barriers I can think of	52	36
Cannot afford education/training	20	14
Not enough jobs available	18	13
Some other barrier	13	9
Lack of affordable childcare	12	8
Skills not suitable for available jobs	10	7
Jobs available not suitable to me	9	6

Percentages do not add to 100% because returners could have selected more than one barrier.
N = 69, seven missing cases.

Source: IES Survey, 1997

for them, most explained that regular hours did not suit them due to childcare responsibilities. Most of the 11 per cent who replied that their skills were not suitable for the jobs available, felt that they needed to update their IT skills.

8.5 Conclusions

The inspiration engendered at the Roadshow was considered almost as important as the informational aspects. The importance of confidence building and support to participants was emphasised by their comments throughout the questionnaire. The Workshop programme in particular was considered very beneficial in this regard. While specific job hunting skills, such as CV and interview preparation were valued for their practical use, it was the broader benefits of increased self confidence and motivation which are emphasised in participants' final comments. Some typical comments were:

> *"The Workshops are a very valuable aid to women who just feel a little afraid to change or unable to recognise how to do things to get the full potential from themselves or others around them."*

> *"I am glad I attended the Roadshow and the Workshops. It made me realise that I know more than I thought I did and it gave me the confidence to look for and find another job. I now work in ASDA as a checkout operator."*

'I felt it was a valuable experience and am sure helped me to be more positive and achieve the job I am currently doing. Socially, I think too that there is a need for this type of course and it could benefit many other people like myself to gain back the confidence and realise their true 'potential' after spending some years out of work/at home raising a family.'

Many also commented that the transition had not been easy, but they had not felt defeated by obstacles, because of the clarity and conviction gained during the Workshops. Some individuals mentioned using the course materials to boost their morale at times and others requested refresher courses.

9 The Parenting Skills Course

9.1 Introduction

Early in 1997, the Kent Child Care Network ran a series of courses on parenting skills. Thirty-three people attended. This evaluation is based on 30 evaluation forms completed by participants at the end of the course and 22 responses to a postal questionnaire survey conducted by IES during September and October 1997.

The questionnaire was designed to explore how those attending the course viewed it, and the impact it had on them some time after the course ended. The evaluation form looked at more immediate assessments of the course. The assessments of the course soon after it ended and some time later were very similar, although the later assessment showed an element of reflection and experience.

9.2 The people attending the course

All of those returning a questionnaire were women. There was a spread of ages (Table 9:1), and experience, and several respondents commented on the added value this gave to the course:

Table 9:1 Ages of those attending a parenting skills course (N = 22)

	N
18-24	3
25-34	9
35-44	5
45-54	1
55 and over	4

Source: IES Parenting Skills Survey, 1997

'There was a good mix of 'backgrounds' and experience on the course I attended.'

'I found it very interesting learning from younger people why they treat their children the way they do; before the course I was quite amazed at the way some parents behave. I still do not agree with some of them, but I have a greater understanding.'

'It was invaluable that we were all different ages, had different problems with our children and could all learn from one another.'

A few had recently had their first baby. Others had older children, some were grandparents, and a few were working, or planning to work, as childcarers. The majority attending the course had, however, done so to improve their knowledge for looking after their own children (17 out of 22). Three were grandparents, four were looking after other peoples' children and one had attended with a client.[1]

The evaluation forms show that the majority (25 out of 30) had heard about the course through seeing an advertisement in a local newspaper, and a range of newspapers were named. The other five reported hearing of the course through various personal contacts, for example, a friend working at KCN, a social worker, their daughter.

Both the evaluation form and questionnaire survey asked peoples' reasons for attending the course. The questionnaire gave a list of reasons, and respondents were asked to identify as many as applied (Table 9:2). The main reasons for attending were to learn how to deal with child behaviour and to update knowledge on childcare. Meeting and socialising with other parents was also fairly important, and one of the 'other' reasons for attending was:

'I wanted to meet parents who didn't have angels for children.'

Grandparents and parents with older children were more likely to report wanting to update their knowledge of childcare. There was, however, an overall theme of wanting to know more about bringing up children, and a consciousness that ideas change and there is always more to learn. The responses to an open ended question on the evaluation forms very much reflect, and add

[1] These numbers total to more than 22, a few people reported more than one of the categories.

Table 9:2 Reasons for attending the course (N = 22, more than one response allowed)

	N
To learn how to deal with child behaviour	15
To update my knowledge of childcare	11
To meet and socialise with other parents	6
It just sounded interesting	6
To learn about becoming a parent	5
Thinking of looking after children as a career	2
Other	4

Source: IES Parenting Skills Survey, 1997

depth, to Table 9:2. Some examples of the comments made on these forms are:

> *'To update child skills to become a grandparent.'*
>
> *'I am expecting my first child and wanted more information on parenting skills. Also because I often look after other peoples' children and may at a later date look for a change in career re childcare.'*
>
> *'Grandparent needing modern methods of baby/child care.'*
>
> *'I wanted to do the best for my child and become a better parent.'*
>
> *'I feel you can never learn too much about children and bringing them up.'*
>
> *'I think you are never too old to learn and gaining any knowledge to do with the upbringing of children can only be good.'*
>
> *'Wanted to find out latest views, problems and ideas.'*
>
> *'I want to improve my skills as a parent and learn about the up-to-date thinking. Its surprised me how much has changed since my children were babies.'*

Dealing with difficult children and problems generally was another theme running through a number of the comments, for example:

> *'Thought it might help understand my children and cope with everyday problems.'*
>
> *'... to find some different ways to deal with parenting problems.'*

Table 9:3 Age distribution of the children for which those attending the course had responsibility

Age of children	No. of those attending	No. of children*
Under 5 years	19	31
6 to 10 years	11	58
11 to 16 years	2	39

*One woman working in childcare reported having responsibility for 40 six to ten year olds and 38 11 to 16 year olds, and these are included in this table.

Source: IES Parenting Skills Survey, 1997

> *'I wanted to help my children, especially with area on social, emotional and psychological support concerning behaviour.'*

In total the 22 women responding to the questionnaire survey had responsibility for 128 children, although this figure is somewhat inflated by one person working in childcare. The age distribution of these children is shown in Table 9:3. The majority were responsible for very young children, under five years old, and this included those who had attended as parents and as grandparents.

9.3 The course location and facilities

The majority of those responding to the IES survey felt that the location of the course, the day and time at which it was held were convenient (Table 9:4):

> *'The venue and facilities were excellent.'*

As far as any generalisations can be made about Table 9:4, it seems that people were happiest with the day on which the

Table 9:4 The convenience of the course location, day and time (N = 22, row totals)

	Not convenient 1	2	3	4	Very convenient 5
The location	—	1	6	3	12
The day of the week	—	1	1	6	14
The time	1	3	1	4	13

Source: IES Parenting Skills Survey, 1997

Table 9.5 How adequate was the on-site childcare? (N = 21, one person did not answer the question)

Not adequate 1	2	3	4	Very adequate 5	Not needed
8	1	2	1	2	7

Source: IES Parenting Skills Course, 1997

course was held, followed by the time (although there was also more dissatisfaction with this). Various comments suggest some reasons for the time being inconvenient:

> *'Personally for me to start them a little later after lunch, quite a rush to feed babies, get ready and out.'*

> *'I was unable to attend all the sessions because I am in full-time work.'*

However, those for whom the day, time and/or location were totally inconvenient would not have attended the course, so Table 9:4 only gives a partial picture. The evaluation form did not ask about these issues. However, a few people did comment on the nature of the location. These comments were along the lines of the following:

> *'Try not to have it in a nursery/play group building, the children's noise can be distracting.'*

Given the location of the course, the responses to a question: 'How adequate was the on-site childcare facility?' are perhaps surprising. Seven people reported that they had no children needing care, and one did not answer the question. Eight said that the on-site childcare was not adequate (including one who commented that there was none available), and two that it was very adequate (Table 9:5).

9.4 Views on the course

The evaluation forms completed as the course ended asked participants what they enjoyed about the course, which were the most relevant and interesting sessions and why, and which were the least interesting/useful sessions. These responses provide a picture of immediate reactions to the course. The IES survey collected views on the usefulness and value of individual

sessions and the course overall, after participants had had an opportunity to put what they had learnt into practice. We cannot compare how individuals' views of the course changed over time; these data only provide an overview. A very positive picture emerges.

The things people enjoyed most about the course were its informality, the friendly atmosphere, meeting others and the chance to share experiences, and the variety of subjects covered. The tutor and the way she ran the course were also praised. In particular, people valued the opportunity the course gave them to discuss things and participate, rather than simply be 'talked at'. They valued learning new things, but also being reassured about their existing level of knowledge and ways of treating children. Sharing experiences, and finding that other parents had similar problems and worries was of great value to them. Some comments illustrate these points:

> *'Very informative, covered a wide range of topics, makes you really think about things.'*
>
> *'Friendly relaxed atmosphere which enabled me to absorb the information and advice.'*
>
> *'Meeting people, feeling reassured about what you already know.'*
>
> *'Getting together with other mums and learning other ways of tackling things.'*
>
> *'Sharing of problems between participants.'*

People attending the course were very positive about its coverage. The majority felt that everything covered had been interesting and useful to them. The sessions least likely to have been found interesting or useful were those on baby massage and the talk by a health visitor. There were a number of reasons for this. Although a number were new parents or looking after babies, many were not. Furthermore, there seems to have been a particular problem with the approach taken during this session. The talk by a health visitor was not always seen as relevant to an individual's situation. However, one respondent did comment:

> *'At the time I didn't find the health visitor very relevant, but since than I realised that I have actually taken a lot on board.'*

The sessions on first aid, diet and nutrition and child behaviour were most likely to be reported as the most relevant and

interesting. Although the general consensus was that the whole course was worthwhile:

> *'Dealing with behaviour/punishment, although I found the whole course worthwhile.'*
>
> *'All of them (were interesting and relevant)'*
>
> *'Learning to see things from a child's point of view.'*
>
> *'Play — I wish I'd known these things when mine were young.'*

The comments made on the evaluation forms are reflected in the assessments of each session in the IES survey (Tables 9:6 and 9:7). What is interesting is that there is not always a relationship between the value placed on a session and the amount it was used. The session on first aid, for example, was quite highly valued, and very favourably commented on in the evaluation forms. The information had not, however, always been put to much use. This emphasises the role of the course in providing information and skills to people, which gave them greater confidence in bringing up or looking after children. This might not always be of immediate use to them, but is there if needed and, in some cases, probably informs behaviour indirectly.

Table 9:6 The extent to which the information from each of the sessions had been used (N = 22, row totals. If a row does not total to 22, the remainder did not give an answer)

	Used a lot	Used a bit	Not used	Did not attend session
Practical hands-on sessions (clay, dough, etc.)	4	10	4	4
Child health	4	12	4	2
Diet/nutrition	9	9	3	1
First aid	3	7	8	3
Baby massage	1	8	10	3
Child development	10	9	3	—
Learning through play	14	6	—	2
Holistic play (learning through play)	6	9	4	2
Parents' own needs	4	12	5	1
Behaviour/emotional development	6	12	3	1

Source: IES Parenting Skills Survey, 1997

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 9:7 The value individual sessions (N = 22, row totals. If a total does not total to 22, the remainder did not give an answer)

	Very valuable 1	2	3	4	Not at all valuable 5	Did not attend session
Practical hands-on sessions (clay, dough, etc.)	6	2	8	–	2	4
Child health	5	5	8	1	1	2
Diet/nutrition	5	9	6	–	1	1
First aid	3	4	9	2	–	3
Baby massage	–	3	4	5	6	3
Child development	6	9	3	2	1	–
Holistic play (learning through play)	6	8	3	1	1	2
Parents' own needs	4	3	6	4	2	1
Behaviour/emotional development	6	5	6	–	3	1

Source: IES Parenting Skills Survey, 1997

Several people commented that the sessions on child behaviour and development had been useful because it gave them different techniques for dealing with their children, or reassured them in what they were already doing. For example:

'We all need ideas on how to cope.'

'I had problems before the course with her behaviour.'

'Dealing with children differently to suit different personalities.'

'I don't think I'm very strict with my children and [it was useful] also for discussing with other parents who have problems.'

These arguments are reinforced when the overall usefulness of the course is explored.

'The course helped me understand my children's needs more. I now spend more time playing with them.'

The course refreshed by memory on things I had forgotten, taught me new 'skills' and made me more aware of small children's needs and development.'

'Becoming a parent for the first time is daunting and the course provided a guide. Finding out other people's experiences and how they coped. It gave me a different outlook on things.'

'I learnt a lot about child development and it was good to be able to talk to other parents with similar worries.'

Although no 'new'/unknown topics were covered, the information that resulted through discussion was constructive and made me re-examine some personal views, eg with regard to child behaviour.'

Those rating the course less favourably were not particularly critical of the course overall. It was usually one aspect which was less satisfactory, for example, a lack of childcare facilities, the feeling that the course did not really apply to older children (*ie* usually over ten). Another was working with children and families and had not attended for personal reasons. The person rating the course at four, reported:

'The course only dealt with topics in general terms.'

In general, the reasons given for the usefulness of the course fit closely with the responses to other questions in the survey. A number of overall themes emerge from the data, in particular, the reassurance attending the course had given to people, as well as learning new knowledge.

The evaluation form asked whether expectations had been met, and the IES survey asked to what extent the course had met the needs of individuals. The majority reported that their expectations and needs had been met, and many of the reasons for this relate closely to the issues already discussed. A few people had not known what to expect of the course, and several reported:

'It was better than expected.'

'I've learnt more than I thought I would.'

In the IES survey, 13 reported that the course had fully met their needs. Seven felt that it had only partly met their needs and two that it had not met their needs at all. A routing error in the questionnaire means that we have little information from the direct question about the ways in which needs were not met. However, many of the responses to other questions do illustrate any additional needs. In particular, people wanted more on behaviour issues, and to some extent play. Some of those with

older children felt that the course had not been particularly relevant to them.

9.5 The impact of the course on parents and children

The value of a course, to a large extent, lies in its impact. Many of the comments explored in relation to participants' assessment of the course suggest that the course did have a positive impact. This is reinforced by the responses to a set of direct questions on the impact of the course, on participants and children. A number of general themes are continued, in particular, the reassurance and the greater understanding the course gave to people dealing with children.

Table 9:8 suggests quite a big impact on those attending the course. In particular, they felt more aware of child behaviour and development, and it is interesting that these areas were also amongst those on which more information was wanted. There was evidence of uncertainty and concern around the management of poor behaviour in particular, but also child development more generally. Those attending the course felt much more confident in these areas, and reassured, but still felt there was more to be learnt.

Many of the comments made more specifically on the impact of the course, on the evaluation forms and in the IES Survey, reflect the patterns emerging from Table 9:8. People felt more confident, reassured and more generally informed on a range of issues. Some detailed quotes illustrate the types of impact:

> *'It has helped me to look at things from their point of view sometimes and has helped me put things into perspective, ie thinking about what matters and what does not as far as dealing with child behaviour.'*
>
> *'It has made me more aware of the stages children go through in normal development. This has helped me to cope better with my children and has given me some ideas of how to cope when difficulties arise.'*
>
> *'More patient. More confident in my ability as a good parent.'*
>
> *'It has shown me that I need not feel guilty when I do something for myself.'*
>
> *'As a grandparent I have found the responsibility seems far harder than I recall with my own children, and feel that I have*

106

Table 9:8 The impact of the course (N = 22, row totals)

	Strongly agree 1	2	3	4	Strongly disagree 5
I understand children's behaviour better	9	8	4	–	1
I feel I can contribute more fully to children's development	9	9	2	1	1
I am more confident that I am doing the right things	8	9	5	–	–
I am confident in providing a better diet for children	8	7	5	–	2
I am more patient in allowing children to learn to do things themselves	6	12	3	–	1
I am able to provide more appropriate play activites for children	4	11	6	1	–
I can deal with difficult situations more easily	3	11	6	2	–
I am likely to take appropriate action before a difficult situation arises	3	11	6	1	1
I now know what to do in an emergency	3	8	7	3	1
I often feel nervous I am doing the wrong thing	1	–	5	10	6

Source: IES Parenting Skills Survey, 1997

> *become more relaxed with my grandchildren and they respond to me better because of this.'*
>
> *'I have now got involved with my local pre-school group. The course also showed me that it is important to make time for me as well as the children.'*

Only four participants felt that attending the course had not had an impact on the children they were involved with. Two of these did, however, have older children and the course was for parents of children aged five or under. The comments describing the impact attending the course had had on children were very similar to those on the impact generally. People felt more confident and knowledgeable, reassured that they were acting

correctly or reasonably. Overall there was a feeling of being better equipped to relate to and understand young children and, as a result, it was reported that children behaved better, were more relaxed, more certain of the boundaries within which they could operate, and were being given more stimulation and opportunities to develop. For example:

'I am more patient in dealing with children and definitely more confident in providing a healthy diet. I can use all the interesting ideas about learning through play, as a result of attending the course I feel more creative and inventive when playing with my child.'

'Being more patient and understanding of my child's needs has made him easier to handle as he seems more relaxed in his attitude towards authority. More stimulated in his day-to-day activities, and generally a happier and less frustrated child.'

'I don't fuss about their safety so much, so the children have more freedom to express themselves.'

'My grandson is only five months old so no comment on his impact, but it did my confidence a lot of good which I am sure transmits to him.'

'Because I feel a bit more relaxed, the children do not wind me up so much so we all enjoy the time together. Also meal times do not seem such a battle.'

'My eldest son has improved in his learning. My youngest son has improved in his learning through play, being able to get his words out.'

Despite the general dissatisfaction with the session on baby massage, it was useful to some people:

'My baby really benefits from baby massage and I am also more confident about health and nutrition, so I prepare more of the baby's food and avoid using jars.'

9.6 How could the course be improved?

Both the evaluation form and the IES questionnaire asked for suggestions about improving the course. A number of themes emerge, although the overall assessment was that the course had been very good as it was.

In particular, people wanted more time spent on child development and behaviour, especially on dealing with behavioural

problems. The course was a holistic parenting course, not a behavioural management course. However, a number of parents had attended to help them cope more appropriately with difficult children. In general they felt they had learnt a lot. Nonetheless, this was still an area in which participants felt they wanted more depth and detail. Specific areas mentioned were how to deal with children with behavioural and emotional problems, and how to challenge children's behaviour and set boundaries which they would keep within. It was also suggested that an educational psychologist and a specialist on child behaviour could be asked to contribute. These comments do illustrate a gap in information provision more generally, rather than being a specific criticism of the course. Many parents dealing with difficult children need advice and reassurance around these issues.

Some people seemed to have attended the course under the misapprehension that it was relevant to parents of children of all ages. Again, this illustrates a gap in the information available to parents. A few suggested running different courses, or sessions to address the needs of different age groups. At the same time, one or two felt that the course was not really appropriate for new parents, although several of the new mothers attending were very satisfied.

Another area which several people felt could be usefully addressed was the transition to school. How to prepare young children for school, and how to deal with any problems as they emerged. In relation to older children, in particular, people wanted to know about how to deal with drugs and bullying, for example. It was suggested that a primary school teacher could give a talk about the curriculum. There have been so many changes in education that parents often feel out of touch with the most recent developments.

A range of other areas were also suggested for inclusion, although by fewer people than the above. Several wanted more factual information on childcare, resources for children in the local area and returning to work. Others wanted more on play and first aid, and something on sibling rivalry. There was also a suggestion that more attention should be given to individual problems, possibly using role play to work through them and explore appropriate responses.

Finally, some comments were made on the organisation of the course, rather than its content. A few commented on the lack of childcare facilities and the noisy location. Others suggested that rather than every topic lasting for two hours, some should be shorter and others longer.

9.7 Conclusions and an overall assessment

The overwhelming view, from both the IES questionnaire and the evaluation forms was that the parenting skills was well run and successful. A few of the more general comments made on the questionnaires can be used to illustrate this:

> *'I found the parenting skills course very useful, stimulating, interesting and very well run.'*
>
> *'I feel a course of this nature is vital to our community.'*
>
> *'Very good, worthwhile — everyone should attend. Broadened my knowledge. Helped me to have a better perspective on children's behaviour . . . . Keep funding, children will benefit and parents won't be so stressed.'*
>
> *'I would recommend this type of course to anyone with responsibility for raising a child/children.'*
>
> *'I think this course would benefit a few 'good' parents I know.'*

A few people found the course less relevant to their own circumstances, however, most of these still reported general satisfaction and a view that such courses were of overall relevance.

This was the first course run along these lines. Although there were some criticisms of particular sessions or a wish for the balance between topics to be changed, it seems that overall the organisers got things right. The role of the tutor should not be underestimated. People commented that they felt the way she encouraged and enabled discussion was very valuable, and contributed a lot. One respondent commented on how the tutor had created a value free atmosphere so that people did not feel judged, and that this facilitated people sharing experiences.

People valued the informal atmosphere, the opportunity the course gave them to obtain knowledge and share their own problems. The practical and factual sessions, such as play and first aid were reported to be useful and relevant. However, it

was the sessions on child development and behaviour which attracted the most comment in the questionnaire. As well as receiving more ideas about how to cope with children, participants often reported feeling reassured that other people had similar problems to them, and that their approach was not so different from others, or inappropriate. There is now much discussion in the media about the most appropriate ways to bring up children, whether smacking is an acceptable form of punishment, and child abuse generally. It is not surprising if parents, in particular, and anyone involved with children feels confused about what to do, and possibly guilty if they cannot cope. When children are seen to be behaving badly, it is parents who are blamed, but many of those attending this course felt that they were unsure about how to discipline children and manage their behaviour. People training in childcare are taught up to date theories of child development and the acceptable methods of dealing with different behaviours and needs. Parents, and informal carers, are just expected to know. It is not surprising that people value this type of course.

Several of those attending the course were grandparents. Their comments were particularly interesting. They commented on how things had changed since they brought up their own children, and that they wanted to keep up to date with ideas. One reported that things seem to have got much harder since her own children were young. Although things do look different in retrospect, it does seem that parents are increasingly under criticism and many do not necessarily have the relevant knowledge and tools to react appropriately. Others simply feel a lack of confidence.

10 Conclusions and Implications

10.1 Out-of-school childcare

A major impact

The out-of-school childcare initiative in Kent has contributed greatly to the provision of out-of-school childcare in the county. One respondent summarised its impact:

> *'. . . without grant funding from KCN, training and support given, our club would not exist at all.'*

It is not just the grant funding which has been important, but also the additional support and advice provided, in particular by the TEC and Kent Child Care Network.

The provision of out-of-school childcare has been important in helping parents, mothers in particular, enter or return to work, or to increase their existing participation in the labour market. Some impact was also reported on fathers, in particular enabling them to increase the hours they worked. A very important benefit of the formal provision of out-of-school childcare is the peace of mind and certainty it gives parents. They know that the arrangements will not collapse at short notice, the care is reliable and safe. This is also of benefit to employers and likely to help people when looking for jobs. Employers want to be sure that any childcare arrangements are stable and reliable. Parents also reported that they felt less guilty about leaving their children, as they knew they were enjoying being at the club and often benefiting from attending. In the few cases where a child was not happy at the club, there was some tension and uncertainty about these arrangements.

Lone parents

Nothing has been said about the position of lone parents in our evaluation. The number involved was very small, and it is important not to place too much emphasis on the actual figures. However, our data do suggest that the impact of out-of-school clubs on lone parents is at least as strong as on two-parent families. The withdrawal of existing provision would have a particular impact on their ability to remain in the labour market. It is also important not to place too much emphasis on the role of childcare in helping lone parents into employment or training, at the expense of other factors. Other studies have looked in detail at the position of lone parents.[1] The availability of childcare is only one factor which influences their decision making.

A need for regular opening hours, and possibly longer hours?

There was general satisfaction with the hours opened by term-time clubs. The greatest difficulty for parents was when a club was unable to open every day during the week. A few parents wanted the clubs to open longer hours, especially in the evening. This does raise an issue which might need to be addressed in the longer run. It is argued that working patterns in the future are likely to become more varied. Much of the forecast growth in jobs is in part-time work and self-employment. This may create pressure for clubs to be open for much longer hours during the week, and possibly at weekends as well. There is currently much concern about the 'long hours culture' in Britain, and evidence suggests that, on average, fathers work longer hours than men who are not fathers. While there are some pressures to address this long hours culture, other factors suggest it is likely to continue as a fact of life for many people. At the moment, our data suggest that parents generally feel that their children benefit from attending a club and are happy there. However, serious questions will need to be addressed about the impact on children, parents and families if pressure for longer opening hours emerges further.

---

[1] See for example, R Ford (1996) *Childcare in the balance. How lone parents make decisions about work*, PSI

A vital role for holiday care

This evaluation focused on the provision of after-school care. However, it also illustrated a considerable demand for holiday care. Not all clubs provided holiday care as well, or only did so on a few days or for part of the day. A number of parents reported difficulties when the provision of care was not continuous throughout the year. The provision of holiday care does raise a number of issues not fully explored by this evaluation. However, to enable parents to fully exploit any opportunities in the labour market, year-round out-of-school provision is desirable. The staffing of clubs has different implications. Furthermore, many clubs are run by people who put a considerable amount of their own time into the administration, *etc*. An added difficulty is that many clubs are only just covering their costs. Expansion and development will be difficult for a number.

The financing of clubs – a major issue

Our study found that most clubs seemed to have become self-sustaining, usually on parental fees. However, very few were making much, if any surplus of income over expenditure, and hence had few reserves with which to improve their provision or cover any large expenditures which might become necessary. Obtaining additional funding once the grant ended was not easy. Parental fees were therefore very important and some clubs were not able to set them at a level which covered their costs. Some of this might be attributable to poor business management a different sort of study would be needed to explore such issues properly. However, many parents are not very well off, and do not feel able to pay more than a certain level of fees. Those in low-paid work may feel it is easier to give up work, rather than meet higher fees.

This raises major issues over the funding of clubs. Managers reported great difficulties in obtaining funding from other sources. This was also evident in the national evaluation. It seems that much greater attention needs to be given to the structure of clubs, their business and financial planning. Although in theory clubs should be like any small business, it seems this is not always the case in practice. Childcare is different from many other goods and services in the relationship between the price purchasers are able or willing to pay, and the necessity for the service. Much of the success of provision can be attributed to

the initial grant funding, the dedication and commitment of those involved in setting up and running clubs and an ability to 'get by'. It will be essential to monitor how far this is enough to maintain and extend a system of out-of-school clubs.

The need for regular premises

A number of issues were raised, usually by both parents and club managers, which need addressing. The buildings in which clubs are located are, in a number of cases, not really appropriate for this purpose. Some are used for other activities, which might take priority. Rented buildings can often not be altered, or perhaps even decorated to be more appropriate. A lack of outside space, or generally space for physical activity was another problem faced by some clubs. It seems that a number of clubs have to make do with what is available. Although this is not always the case, schools are often the most appropriate type of premises. The children are already there in term time and the buildings are generally suitable for children in terms of safety, *etc.* In Kent a number of clubs have been set up in association with nursery schools, and this also seems usually to work well, although did not always seem to be so satisfactory financially. Perhaps more attention should be given to funding the actual provision of premises, which will do much to contribute to the longer term success of a network of out-of-school clubs. The extension of any network into regular and continuous holiday care also makes this an important consideration.

The need for on-going support and advice

Managers valued the support and advice they received from the TEC, the Child Care Network and a range of other organisations. However, there are areas where it appears that much more support is needed. In particular, managers wanted more support and advice on financial issues, and on all the issues involved in setting up a club.

A major issue around staffing clubs

Another issue of concern was staffing. Parents and club managers reported concerns where children needed individual attention. The staffing ratios and funding of clubs rarely allowed this. Staffing was more generally of concern to club managers.

The term-time hours are very small and at an awkward time, unattractive to many people. One manager, in a set of general comments, included the status of the childcare profession as an area to be addressed:

'. . . a very undervalued, underpaid and under-funded profession.'

Overall a lot has been achieved since the introduction of the grant initiative. Much of this is due to the personal commitment and hard work of those involved, particularly club managers and various members of management committees:

'I spent six months working full-time unpaid to establish the club — all to provide a service to the local community.'

Although many clubs survive, some clubs are floundering and it is questionable whether some will be able to continue, providing a needed service, unless they are provided with further support and finance.

A wider community resource

There is some debate around the extent to which clubs should be providing an educational environment for children. Our evidence suggests that activities related to the curriculum are provided by a minority of clubs, although the majority provide quiet space for homework. However, there are many ways in which children learn, including through more general socialising and mixing with other children and adults, and clubs are playing a role here. Sporting and other active activities were frequently provided and popular amongst the children attending. There is much concern about the health of children and their inactive life style. It seems that clubs can play an important role through providing these types of activities, and a ready-made group to share them. However, there is often a resource question, and the more that is expected of clubs the more support they will need.

Most clubs are in premises which are regularly available, however, many do not have premises entirely devoted to their own use. There are suggestions that out-of-school clubs could be turned into more general community resources. This will be difficult in a number of circumstances, particularly where they are already considerable demands on the premises being used. They could act as general sources of information for parents. However, the organisation and administration of this would have

to be carefully thought out, and resourced. Many club managers are already devoting considerable effort to running their club, for relatively little reward and it is important not to overburden them.

10.2 Events for returners to work

The series of Roadshows and Workshops were attended by a range of people wanting to change their job or career, not just by those planning to return to work after a gap. This suggests a demand for more general career guidance and advice, not just amongst people who have been away from the labour market for a period.

A very important role for these types of event is in increasing the confidence of those attending, showing them the opportunities available and that they are not alone. A lack of confidence is something which employers frequently comment on, amongst women returners but sometimes women more generally. Employers can help through adjusting their recruitment activities to be more supportive of women returners, and through adopting selection mechanisms which focus on identifying the skills and abilities of people more thoroughly. However, there is an important role for events like those which were the subject of this evaluation. Women, indeed anyone who has been away from employment for a while, need support and advice which will help them recognise their abilities and 'sell' these in the labour market. Other studies have shown that many women gain considerable skills which are useful to employers, through bringing up a family, voluntary work, *etc.* and it is important that they learn to recognise and utilise these.

A number of comments were made about the cost of training, and this was reported to be a barrier for some women returners. More attention perhaps needs to be given to these issues, especially as the onus is put on individuals to take more responsibility for their own training and development.

10.3 Parenting Skills

This was the first course run along these lines. Although there were some criticisms of particular sessions or a wish for the balance between topics to be changed, it seems that overall the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

organisers got things right. The role of the tutor should not be underestimated. People commented that they felt the way she encouraged and enabled discussion was very valuable, and contributed a lot. One respondent commented on how the tutor had created a value free atmosphere so that people did not feel judged, and that this facilitated people sharing experiences.

People valued the informal atmosphere, the opportunity the course gave them to obtain knowledge and share their own problems. The practical and factual sessions, such as play and first aid were reported to be useful and relevant. However, it was the sessions on child development and behaviour which attracted the most comment in the questionnaire. As well as receiving more ideas about how to cope with children, participants often reported feeling reassured that other people had similar problems to theirs, and that their approach was not so different from others, or inappropriate. There is now much discussion in the media about the most appropriate ways to bring up children, whether smacking is an acceptable form of punishment, and child abuse generally. It is not surprising if parents, in particular, and anyone involved with children feels confused about what to do, and possibly guilty if they cannot cope. When children are seen to be behaving badly, it is parents who are blamed, but many of those attending this course felt that they were unsure about how to discipline children and manage their behaviour. People training in childcare are taught up-to-date theories of child development and the acceptable methods of dealing with different behaviours and needs. Parents, and informal carers, are just expected to know. It is not surprising that people value this type of course.

Several of those attending the course were grandparents. Their comments were particularly interesting. They commented on how things had changed since they brought up their own children, and that they wanted to keep up to date with ideas. One reported that things seem to have got much harder since her own children were young. Although things do look different in retrospect, it does seem that parents are increasingly under criticism and many do not necessarily have the relevant knowledge and tools to react appropriately. Others simply feel a lack of confidence.

It seems that consideration should be given to the extension of these course. Many parents value support in bringing up their children, especially in a world where so much onus is put on

parents for children's' behaviour and increasingly policy is aiming at parents in dealing with problem children. It is not necessarily that parents are incapable of dealing with difficulties, but rather that the lack the confidence to do so, and would benefit from a wider range of means of doing so. Attention should also be paid to bringing fathers into the course.

Bibliography

Court G (1995), *Women in the Labour Market: Two Decades of Change and Continuity*. IES Report 294

Daycare Trust (1997), *Childcare Now*, Volume 17

Ellison R (1994), 'British Labour Force Projections, 1994–2006', *Employment Gazette*

EOC (1996), *Facts About Women and Men in Great Britain, 1996*, Equal Opportunities Commission

Ford R, Maxted T, Lockett J, Moody T (1997), *Out-of-School Childcare Off the Streets: a Survey of Quality Out-of-School Provision for Older Children*, DfEE

Ford R (1996) *Childcare in the Balance. How Lone Parents Make Decisions About Work*, PSI

Gatenby R (1998), *The Out-of-School Childcare Grant Initiative: an Evaluation of Long-term Sustainability*, DfEE

Meltzer H (1994), *Day Care Services for Children*, HMSO

O'Brien M, Dench S (1996), *The Out-of-School Childcare Grant Initiative*. DfEE Research Series 72

Petrie P (1995), 'The Quality of Out-of-School Services Developed Under the Employment Department Initiative', Annex to Sanderson *et al.* (1995)

Sanderson I, Percy-Smith J, *et al.* (1995), The Out-of-School Childcare Grant Initiative: an interim evaluation. Employment Department Research Series No. 44

Witherspoon S, Prior G (1991), 'Working Mothers; Free to Choose', (in Jowell R *et al.* (eds) *British Social Attitudes: The Eighth Report*)

Helping Parents to Work: a study for Kent TEC

ISBN 1-85184-277-2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE